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of the Epistle of James

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Toward a Postcolonial Reading of the Epistle of James

James 2:1–13 in its Roman Imperial Context

By

Ingeborg Mongstad-Kvammen



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This book is printed on acid-free paper.

To my parents,
Aud Mongstad Kvammen and Roald Kvammen

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PREFACE

What is postcolonial biblical criticism? What is this field of research within which titles such as *Decolonizing Biblical Studies* (Segovia), *The Bible and Empire* (Sugirtharajah), *Exegesis in the Making* (Runesson), *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism* (Moore and Segovia), *The Empire Exegetes back* (Sugirtharaja), *Discourses of Empire* (Leander) and many more have been produced? What are the scholarly strengths, weaknesses and opportunities within this field? What does it contribute to the academic field of Biblical exegesis? These are questions that I have wrestled with as part of my historical exegetical work with the Epistle of James. Why wrestle? Is it not obvious that postcolonialism, as an interdisciplinary academic field that studies all the effects of imperial processes, is relevant to New Testament exegesis? Is it not beyond discussion that texts written during an omnipresent empire such as the Roman should be put under postcolonial scrutiny? Is it not beyond doubt that we find traces of the Roman Empire all through the New Testament and therefore also would benefit from a postcolonial perspective when doing exegesis of these biblical texts? The answers to these questions are all 'yes'. The strength of postcolonial biblical criticism is that postcolonialism as an academic field has provided biblical scholars with an interpretative framework to understand the effects of empire observed in the texts. Postcolonialism has also given us a language with which we can speak and write about these phenomena. Phenomena such as diaspora, uneven power relations, nativism, hybridity etc. can be observed all through the New Testament. So why wrestle? The last twenty years one weakness to postcolonial biblical studies has emerged; very often postcolonial biblical studies do not, from my point of view, interact thoroughly enough with historical biblical criticism. My contribution is to link postcolonialism and historical exegesis thoroughly. I believe that postcolonial biblical studies should take both postcolonialism and historical biblical studies seriously. When putting a text written during the first century Roman Empire under postcolonial scrutiny, one has to work historically with it. From my point of view this has to do with respect for the text, respect for the historical situation of the text and respect for the theoretical perspective of postcolonialism. This is what I am trying to do in this book, and by that I hope to contribute both to postcolonial biblical studies and to historical biblical studies equally.

My main historical contribution to Jamesian research is to make an interpretative point out of the specific identification of the ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος as an equestrian seeking political office, and the πτωχός as a beggar. The author of the Epistle of James criticises how the assembly reacts when an equestrian seeking political office and a beggar both enters the assembly. The epistle gives us no clue to why the equestrian visits the assembly. Maybe he was looking for supporters; maybe he was a Christian himself. In any case he belonged to the very elite of the Roman Empire. The main problem for the author of James is that the members of the assemblies are acting according to Roman cultural etiquette instead of according to their Jewish-Christian religious heritage. When they do this they show partiality, which according to James is incompatible with Christian faith, and they put their trust towards a Roman equestrian instead of towards God. From the postcolonial optic main contributions are a) the identification of an imperial presence in Jas 2:1–13 through the equestrian, b) that I have shown that the main problem in this textual unit really is a case of hybrid identities, and c) that I have shown that the main problem in the textual unit illustrates several examples of binaries; coloniser—colonised, power—powerless, rich—poor, honour—shame, centre—margin and centres in conflict.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As the work with this book has come to an end, one thing has become clear to me: it would not have been possible without the support and inspiration I have received from family, good friends, employers and colleagues. Heartfelt thanks to all of you!

I am grateful to the School of Mission and Theology (MHS) and the MHS library for financial and practical support as well as utter service mindedness. In 2003 I received a PhD scholarship from MHS, without which this work would have been impossible. A special thanks to my PhD-supervisor, professor Jostein Ådna, who in his friendly way both supported and criticised my work in a way that drove me forward. This book is a revised version of my PhD and I have received continuous support from MHS in the form of free library services, free office space, valuable responses etc. throughout the revision work. The revision work started in my mind at the public defence of my PhD-thesis. The adjudication committee was lead by professor Torrey Seland. The first opponent was professor Gosnell Yorke and the second opponent was professor Eve-Marie Becker. The conversation we had and their comments and critiques have been utterly valuable during the revision process. Thank you very much.

When I started the work on this revision, my employer was the Chaplaincy Norwegian Defence. I am especially grateful for the possibility given to me by the military dean, brigadier general dr. Alf Petter Hagesæther, who generously granted me a study leave to prepare this book. I am also grateful to the chief chaplain of the Royal Norwegian Navy, commander Leif Tore Michelsen, who was always a very generous boss who understood the real value of scholarly work. I continued the work with this book with The Norwegian Bible Society as my employer. I am grateful for the everyday-inspiration the work at the Bible Society gives me, and for the flexible working hours without which this book would not have been published.

Thanks to colleagues and friends at MHS for support, critique and generally for making the workdays a pleasure. A special thanks to my fellow PhD student, now associate professor, dr. Kari Storstein Haug.

A heartfelt thanks to my friend and fellow scholar, Ingeborg Hovland, who has read the manuscript and given valuable responses and linguistic advice.

Last but not least, a warm and heartfelt thanks to my dear parents, Aud Mongstad Kvammen and Roald Kvammen, who have given me both moral, economic and practical support, and who are my two great role models!

NOTE ON FOOTNOTES, BIBLIOGRAPHY AND ABBREVIATIONS

To generate footnotes and bibliography, I have used the template “Tura-bian bibliography” in the computer programme EndNote X1.

For abbreviations I have used the standard found in the *SBL Handbook of Style*, chapter eight “Abbreviations”.¹ A few series and journals that I have consulted are not listed in the *SBL Handbook of Style*. In these cases I have not used any abbreviation but written the names in full. The only exception for this is the abbreviation NA²⁷ which is used for the Nestle-Aland 27th edition of the *Novum Testamentum Graece*.

¹ Patrick H. Alexander and others, eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1999).

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE—A POSTCOLONIAL OPTIC

ON JAMES 2:1–13

Prelude

Mari Boine, a Sámi musician, reflected upon her personal and her people's experience of being suppressed in the radio documentary "Jævelens verk—et portrett av Mari Boine".¹ She cited a text, her first lyrics in the Sámi language, and a cultural translation of John Lennon's 'Working class hero':

As a child I happily walked to school, but there they told me: 'We speak Norwegian here.' And I felt little and stupid when they said about my mother tongue: 'We keep silent about that.' That is how I learnt that the Sámi person was wretched. That is how I learnt to believe 'You are a Sámi, you are wretched.'²

The experience Mari Boine introduces us to with this text is quite typical for the colonised. The fact that somebody else, another power, defines you personally and all of your people as without worth and as wretched, the fact that you *learn* that you are subordinate, and the consequences of this, are central elements to imperialism's impact on people and cultures. Postcolonial studies focus on and oppose these impacts. Thus there is a sense of the subaltern within postcolonial studies. One of the main focuses is on marginalised persons and cultures, and postcolonial studies often look at uneven power relations. Issues central to postcolonial studies are, amongst others, subaltern knowledge, history and power, binaries such as centre and margin, coloniser and colonised, power and powerless, majority and minority. Space and land, identity, hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence, naming of oppressors, and opposition to oppression are equally central issues to postcolonial studies. These issues are studied using a wide range of

¹ English translation: "The devil's doing—a portrait of Mari Boine." An introduction to the documentary can be read at <http://www.nrk.no/programmer/radio/radiodokumentaren/3036882.html> and the documentary can be listened to at <http://www.nrk.no>.

² This is my translation into English from Boine's translation from the Sámi language to Norwegian. Mari Bone's Norwegian translation goes like this: "Som barn gikk jeg lykkelig vegen til skolen, men der sa de det: "Her snakker vi norsk." Og liten og dum syns jeg sjøl at jeg var, da de sa om mitt morsmål: "Vi tier om det." Sånn lærte jeg å tro at det samiske var usselt. Sånn lærte jeg å tro "du er same og usselt."

academic disciplines: political studies, history, anthropology, literary studies, biblical studies, and so on. Some writers have emphasised political liberation, such as Frantz Fanon,³ some have emphasised linguistic and cultural liberation, such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o, who has abolished the English language as a relevant language for him to write in,⁴ and some have emphasised academic liberation, such as Edward Said.⁵ Common for the postcolonial perspective in all these academic disciplines is that they at one level or another all study the effects of imperial processes.

Let me return to the Mari Boine citation. What made her feel wretched can be understood as a process of colonisation in which teaching the colonised that they are unworthy is central to gaining power over them. To be taught that you personally and all of your people are wretched is a colonisation of the minds that, according to postcolonialists, is necessary for colonisation of the land. Colonialism/imperialism would not be possible without a colonisation of the minds of the people, and therefore decolonisation of the mind is an important part of postcolonialism. The wide influence of literary studies on postcolonialism probably has to do with this aspect. We can observe this in Loomba:

Literary texts are crucial to the formation of colonial discourses precisely because they work imaginatively and upon people as individuals. But literary texts do not simply reflect dominant ideologies; they also militate against them, or contain elements which cannot be reconciled to them.⁶

Postcolonial literary studies focus both on texts that are written from the perspective of the coloniser, and texts written from the perspective of the colonised. The purpose is to illuminate how literature is being used both to colonise and to decolonise the minds of the people. When the term 'postcolonial literature' is used, it refers to bodies of literature that "emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization

³ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1986).

⁴ Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1986).

⁵ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 25th anniversary ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). Said presents three main points in his ground-breaking book *Orientalism*. First, Orientalism as a scholarly discipline was a necessity for the colonisation of the Orient. Thus, power and knowledge were closely linked. Second, he says that the Orient as such was a European construct. Third, he argues that the Orient as a European construct was necessary for the European construction of its 'self'. The Orient was a contrasting image for Europe.

⁶ Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, The New Critical Idiom (London/New York: Routledge, 1998), 74.

and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre".⁷

Tools of postcolonial literary studies may be many. One path is to focus on issues central to postcolonial studies when analysing a text. Put in another way, key concepts within postcolonialism may be relevant tools of a postcolonial analysis of a text. Another path may be to analyse how literature has been used either in the imperial process or to oppose the imperial power. A third path may be to analyse how literature has been used to define 'the other'.⁸ In my postcolonial analysis of Jas 2:1–13 I shall focus on key concepts within postcolonialism such as diaspora, imperial presence, binarism, oppression, and 'othering'.

Postcolonialism and Biblical Studies

Postcolonial studies, as they emerged in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, were adapted by biblical scholars in the mid-1990s.⁹ There are four main perspectives in postcolonial biblical studies. These are all closely linked to the more general postcolonial literary studies as presented above, hence postcolonial biblical studies can be understood as a sub-category of the more general postcolonial literary studies.

The first perspective is that texts within the Bible can be understood as reflecting opposition towards a suppressive regime. These texts are written from the perspective of the colonised. Thus a postcolonial analysis of the Bible focuses on its historic role as an oppositional text.¹⁰

⁷ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures*, 2nd ed., New Accents (London: Routledge, 2003), 2. Well-known authors and theorists of postcolonial literature are Homi Bhabha, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Isabel Allende, Julia Alvarez, Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and others.

⁸ This is what Edward Said did in *Orientalism*.

⁹ Postcolonial biblical scholarship is a rather new enterprise. As such, the field is relatively clearly demarcated both regarding scholars and published material. To the best of my knowledge, the three first published works on the topic are: Laura E. Donaldson, "Postcolonialism and Scriptural Reading," *Semeia* 75 (1996), R.S. Sugirtharajah, *Asian biblical hermeneutics and postcolonialism: contesting the interpretations*, The Bible & liberation series (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1998) and R.S. Sugirtharajah, *The postcolonial Bible, Bible and postcolonialism*, vol. 1 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

¹⁰ This is one of Segovia's perspectives when he says that because the Bible was written under the impact of omnipresent empires, this has to be considered in the interpretation of the Bible, see Fernando F. Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins*, 1st ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2000), 125. Segovia has made significant contributions to postcolonial biblical studies over the last decade and has published widely. I have

On the other hand there are also texts within the Bible written from the perspective of the coloniser. Hence, the second perspective is that the Bible can be read historically as a colonising text. In other words, there is an ambivalence in the Bible itself, as both a colonising text and an oppositional text. This ambivalence is emphasised by Musa W. Dube in her interpretation of the exodus story.¹¹

A third perspective within postcolonial biblical scholarship is to examine the role the Bible has had in the Western colonisation of Africa, South America and Asia.¹² This is a specific part of the more general analysis of the role literature had in the European colonising project from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries and can be seen both as research history and as ethics of Biblical scholarship.

The fourth perspective is an analysis of Western interpretations of the Bible and the social and political background for these interpretations. Central issues are: How has the omnipresence of the Western empires had an impact on Western scholars and their interpretations of the Bible? What questions have they asked and what questions have they not asked, being representatives of the colonial power? Both R.S. Sugirtharajah and Fernando Segovia are spokesmen for this perspective, which also can be understood as research ethics and research history. Sugirtharajah argues that postcolonial biblical criticism should critique the texts themselves as colonising texts, as well as the Western interpretations of these texts. Segovia argues similarly that since the academic discipline of biblical criticism was developed parallel to the process of European imperialism, an analysis of Western interpretations of the Bible is relevant to postcolonial biblical scholarship.¹³ This fourth perspective, that probably should be expanded to all interpretations of the Bible, not only Western, seems to be somewhere in the juxtaposition between research history and research

drawn on his research and he is the main scholar from whom I shall pick my postcolonial perspective. Although he has published widely, the study from 2000, cited above, may be seen as his main contribution, and it is clearly representative of his contributions to postcolonial biblical criticism. Therefore, when referring to Segovia, I shall refer to this specific study.

¹¹ See Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial feminist interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000), 69f. Segovia's more general expression that a postcolonial optic on the Bible must take into consideration the omnipresence of the Empire is relevant also for this perspective of postcolonial biblical studies.

¹² Dube understands the Bible as a modern imperialising text, *Ibid.*, 3.

¹³ See R.S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 75, and Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies*, 128.

ethics. Through this perspective one is at least shedding a moral light on biblical scholarship.

When it comes to specific postcolonial interpretations of biblical texts, the approaches are varied. Fernando Segovia, who has introduced the term ‘postcolonial optic’ argues that postcolonial biblical studies do not constitute their own method, but are rather to be understood as a reader perspective that can be combined with several methodological approaches. Segovia understands this reader perspective to be a twofold optic, where on the one hand the exegete analyse the biblical texts bearing in mind that they have been written under the impact of empire, and on the other hand analyse interpretations of these texts bearing in mind that these interpretations emerged during a period of Western imperialism and thus have also been developed under the impact of empire. Segovia writes:

A first dimension of a postcolonial optic in biblical criticism involves an analysis of the texts of ancient Judaism and early Christianity that takes seriously into consideration their broader sociocultural contexts in the Near East and the Mediterranean Basin, respectively, in the light of an omnipresent, inescapable, and overwhelming sociopolitical reality—the reality of empire, of imperialism and colonialism, as variously constituted and exercised during the long period in question.¹⁴

A second dimension of the proposed postcolonial optic in biblical criticism involves an analysis of the readings and interpretations of the texts of Jewish and Christian antiquity that takes seriously into account their broader sociocultural context in the West, [...] in the light of the same omnipresent, inescapable, and overwhelming sociopolitical reality that surrounded the production of the texts of ancient Judaism and early Christianity—the reality of empire, of imperialism and colonialism, now with regard to the Western imperial tradition of the last five hundred years.¹⁵

Segovia’s view on postcolonial biblical criticism gives postcolonial biblical scholars the possibility of using various methods in combination with a conscious postcolonial perspective on the interpretation. Somehow this opens postcolonialism to the wider biblical scholarship, as it gives the individual scholar the possibility to interact with postcolonialism in different ways, either all dimensions in one study, or even just use postcolonialism more or less as a comment to exegetical findings.

A weakness I have observed in many postcolonial biblical studies is a rather shallow exegetical approach. This may have its background in a

¹⁴ Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies*, 125.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 126.

strong postcolonial critique against historical critical methods. However, I believe that postcolonial biblical studies have much to gain through a more thorough exegetical basis for their claims. I hope this book can be a contribution in that direction.

Obstacles to Applying a Postcolonial Optic to Biblical Research

There is a dramatic historical distance between the text of the Bible, in our case the text of the Epistle of James, and the emergence of postcolonialism. This distance represents an obstacle. The distance is that of 2000 years of time, of cultural changes and changes in how texts are read. It is an obvious challenge that postcolonial studies were developed in the late twentieth century against the background of the European empires, whereas the texts studied within biblical scholarship were written against the background of ancient empires.¹⁶ However, a common focus for postcolonial studies within all academic disciplines is that they study the effects of imperial processes. Although the perspective of postcolonialism was developed against the background of Western modern empires, one has to assume that the imperial processes during the Roman Empire affected the imperialised. These effects should be studied in spite of the historical distance to postcolonialism and such an investigation will benefit from a postcolonial perspective as long as that perspective's main aim is to focus on the effects of imperial processes.

A second obstacle is that of the role of the researcher. The crucial question is: 'With what rights can I, a privileged Western researcher, apply postcolonialism to my biblical interpretations?' As soon as postcolonial

¹⁶ Marshall reflects upon the question of historical distance, see John W. Marshall, "Postcolonialism and the Practice of History," in *Her Master's Tools? Feminist and Postcolonial Engagements of Historical-Critical Discourse*, ed. Caroline Vander Stichele and Todd Penner, *Global Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 98: "While modern and early modern empires undoubtedly provided the context for the literary fiction in which the impulses of postcolonial analysis first arose and to which the initial theoretical apparatus was applied, it should be clear that the narrative of the birth of postcolonial analysis does not set the limit on the theory's application. Of course, particular features of modern imperial domination may not be easily mapped onto every other era. Nevertheless, the analytical task before us is to construct working definitions of the most basic apparatuses—colony, empire, imperialism—and to track their applicability across periods and areas of study. Some such basic definitional attempts are made in several contemporary works on postcolonialism, and it is by no means clear that those sketches of the field effectively stamp 'Best after 1492' on the postcolonial analytical framework."

studies are adapted by privileged Western scholars, can they still be called postcolonial, or has postcolonialism itself become colonised?¹⁷

This problem is similar to the general problem of the subaltern. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has addressed this in the momentous essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?”¹⁸ Her answer to the question in the title of the essay is no. As soon as the subaltern is speaking it ceases to be subaltern. From her point of view one might say that even though postcolonialism is theorising from the subaltern, the practitioners of postcolonial studies can never themselves be the marginalised. They may have a background from among the subalterns, but as soon as they enter academia and engage in postcolonial discourse, they can no longer be subaltern. On a general level my point of view is that when a critical theory is developed within academia it becomes available to all. It is in its nature universal and no group or single individual can have hegemony over that particular theory. This coincides with Spivak’s view. As soon as postcolonialism has become an academic discipline, the right to use it does not come from the individual researcher’s identity.¹⁹ In addition I agree with Sugirtharajah who has reflected on this obstacle and said that since colonialism has an effect both on the colonised and the coloniser both should take part in the decolonising process and engage in postcolonial criticism.²⁰

¹⁷ This obstacle may be somewhat parallel to that of feminist studies. Can a male scholar do feminist studies? There may be different answers to that question. Within feminist studies I have observed that there are male contributors to books such as Sandra Harding, ed., *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual & Political Controversies*, (New York: Routledge, 2004). (Fredric Jameson, Dick Pels, Fernando J. García Selgas and Joseph Rouse), and Linda J. Nicholson, ed., *Feminism/Postmodernism*, Thinking Gender (New York: Routledge, 1990). (Andreas Huyssen).

¹⁸ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” in *The post-colonial studies reader*, ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, (London: Routledge, 2003).

¹⁹ This is also in agreement with Marshall, see Marshall, “Postcolonialism and the Practice of History,” 97.: “Though the role of identity in historical-critical endeavors merits constant scrutiny, rights to historical-critical postcolonial criticism do not flow from identities. In the study of religion—where our approach to our subject matter is already programmatically oblique to the questions that our data actively raise—we must be able, when we choose, to free ourselves from the idea that our postcolonialism needs to have direct application outside the academy.”

²⁰ See R.S. Sugirtharajah, “Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation,” in *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, ed. R.S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2006), 65.

*The Application of a Postcolonial Optic to the Interpretation
of James 2:1–13*

First of all, why a postcolonial optic to the interpretation of Jas 2:1–13? What makes this text especially suitable for postcolonialism? The answer is that there is a direct references to the Roman Empire and to Roman cultural etiquette in Jas 2:1–13. Therefore the text is especially suitable for a postcolonial reading. My main finding in the historical exegesis of the text is that the two men entering the *synagogē* in Jas 2:2–4 are a beggar and a Roman equestrian running for political office. The assembly treats the two according to Roman cultural etiquette by giving them seating according to their rank. However, in relation to the assembly's Jewish-Christian background they are treating the two with a partiality that is against their religious heritage.²¹ From a postcolonial perspective these historical findings can be understood both as examples of hybrid identities, consequences of diasporic living, colonial oppression, resistance against oppression and as examples of several binaries related to the binary coloniser—colonised.

Secondly there is, as far as I am aware, a research lacuna concerning Jas 2:1–13 and postcolonialism. No scholars have previously used postcolonialism when interpreting Jas 2:1–13. The only postcolonial readings of James known to me are the ones done by Sharon H. Ringe and Jason Coker. Ringe has within the limit of 10 pages done a postcolonial reading of the whole epistle, and Jason Coker has done a postcolonial reading of the second half of James 2.²² This research lacuna might be due to several reasons, one of them being that the researchers that have already identified an imperial presence in the text, did this mainly prior to the later postcolonial endeavours in biblical research. Bo Reicke argued in a study from 1964 that the man wearing a gold ring was a Roman nobleman of senatorial rank seeking political office. He seems to be the only one who

²¹ This point is elaborated in the exegesis of the ratio, vv. 2–4.

²² Sharon H. Ringe, "The Letter of James," in *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia and R.S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and Postcolonialism* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), K. Jason Coker, "Nativism in James 2.14–26: A Post-Colonial Reading," in *Reading James with New Eyes: Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of James*, ed. Robert L. Webb and John S. Kloppenborg, *Library of New Testament Studies* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007). In addition it may be a point of dispute whether Elsa Tamez' study on the Epistle of James should be understood as a postcolonial study, see Elsa Tamez, *The Scandalous Message of James: Faith Without Works Is Dead*, trans. John Eagleson, (New York: Crossroad, 2002).

has combined the gold ring and the clothing so that imperial presence in the text is inevitable.²³

My aim is to present a historical interpretation of Jas 2:1–13 with a postcolonial optic. Practically I shall focus the historical reading of the text towards key concepts within postcolonial studies. Through this I will show how the omnipresence of the Roman Empire is central to the argument of the textual unit.

A first focus will be on the concept of *diaspora* as a precondition for the Epistle of James. A second is on the specific *imperial presence* in the text. A third focus will be on *hybridity* or *hybrid identities*. Hybridity “commonly refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization”.²⁴ Frantz Fanon, a psychiatrist from Martinique who worked in Algeria in the early 1950s, is probably the critic who has had the strongest influence on an understanding of the mind of colonised peoples.²⁵ His idea of hybridity is that a colonial presence influences the identities of the people who have been colonised. The colonised try to change their identities and through this they reject their own identities to become more like the colonisers. This leads to agony and dislocated subjects. The author of the Epistle of James accuses the assemblies for being too Roman. At the centre of the problem in Jas 2:1–13 lays hybridity. A fourth focus is on *oppression*. The oppressors are named in Jas 2 as the rich. James also warn his addressees against becoming oppressors themselves. This is not an uncommon effect of colonialism. The fifth focus is on *binarism*. In Jas 2 there are several binaries relevant to colonialism/postcolonialism. These are coloniser—colonised, power—powerless, centre—margin, rich—poor, honour—shame, mercy—merciless and Rome—Jerusalem. A sixth focus is the question about the portrayal of ‘*the other*’ in Jas 2. Said has shown that for the people in power it is necessary to define the people that they have power over as ‘otherness’.²⁶ From the opposite perspective, it may be important for the powerless to define a negative other, a contrasting image of themselves. This may be a strategy for survival. We can see this very clearly in Jas 2:1–13 where Rome and the oppressors are portrayed as the negative ‘other’ of the Christians.

²³ See Bo Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, 2 ed., The AB, vol. 37 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1964). Others have reflected upon the gold ring as an insignia ring.

²⁴ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, Routledge Key Guides (London: Routledge, 2000), 118.

²⁵ See Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*.

²⁶ This is one of his main points in *Orientalism*, see Said, *Orientalism*, 58.

I believe that by focusing on these key concepts the postcolonial optic through which I read the text will show how the imperial power is central to the argument of Jas 2:1–13.

METHODOLOGY

A historical investigation cannot be ‘objective’ in the sense of establishing a series of unquestionable ‘facts’. What we can do, as historians, is to establish probability given certain factors. That is what I shall try to do in relation to Jas 2:1–13. Given that the Epistle of James was written in a certain time to certain audiences in a certain culture, I shall try to establish a probable understanding of the text. For the process of establishing such a probable reading, I have found Vernon K. Robbins’ socio-rhetorical interpretation helpful. I shall use his methodological framework as a starting point for my own methodology.

Robbins’ socio-rhetorical interpretation explores a certain text’s relation to other texts, rhetoric, history, culture, and so on. One might say that he views a text as if it were several layers of tapestry. When interpreting a text one has to use several different approaches according to which layer one is focusing on. The background for his multitude of approaches is that since the 1960s a multitude of methods have been developed within biblical research. However, these have not been in dialogue with each other. Robbins tries to make a synthesis of these. He says that

there is a growing number of interpreters who are calling for serious dialogue among interpreters who focus on literary and rhetorical phenomena and interpreters who focus on historical, social, cultural, ideological and theological phenomena.²⁷

The goal is to present a set of integrated strategies of interpretation to give us a better understanding of a text. One of Robbins’ main goals is to complement historical-critical methods with for example literary and rhetorical analysis and he is of the opinion that this will help to meet the challenges of biblical scholarship in the twenty-first century.²⁸ Robbins further observes that the texts of first-century Christianity also stand in relation to society, culture and history:

²⁷ Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, society and ideology* (London: Routledge, 1996), 2f.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

Society, culture and texts are all environments in which meanings and meaning effects interact with one another. The challenge, then, is to develop strategies of analysis and interpretation that exhibit the multiple networks of meanings and meaning effects that the words in our texts represent, engage, evoke and invite.²⁹

At the same time, Robbins is quick to underline that even though this multi-layered approach helps the reader to interpret a text from different angles, not every angle should necessarily be used on every text.³⁰ Hence, his socio-rhetorical approach represents several integrated interpretative strategies from which one can and should pick the ones most relevant for the text at hand. Through this one can “set specialized areas of analysis in conversation with one another”.³¹ Obviously, not every specialised area of analysis is appropriate for every text. Robbins identifies four main areas of analysis, namely inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture and ideological texture.³² These four areas also have multiple layers. What I find especially relevant and helpful about Robbins’ approach is that it encompasses a variety of approaches in which historical interpretations can be combined with other forms of approaches and thus altogether form a better understanding of a text. The text is not only seen as a historical witness, but also as communication, as witness about a culture, as related to other texts and to culture, as ideological, and so on. I shall not engage in a full socio-rhetorical interpretation as outlined by Robbins. What I shall do is to use some of Robbins’ tools for a socio-rhetorical interpretation—the ones most relevant for Jas 2:1–13—as tools in my historical interpretation. Let me therefore present the four main areas for interpretation that Robbins has identified: inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture and ideological texture.

Inner Texture

Inner texture has to do with the inner nature of a text. It has to do with how a text communicates a message through the process of reading. It also

²⁹ Ibid., 9.

³⁰ Ibid., 3.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 24. Robbins presents these four textures briefly in chapter two: inner texture pp. 27–30, intertexture pp. 30–33, social and cultural texture pp. 33–36 and ideological texture pp. 36–40. He then dedicates one chapter for each texture: inner texture is presented in chapter three, pp. 44–95, intertexture is presented in chapter four, pp. 96–143, social and cultural texture is presented in chapter five, pp. 144–191, and ideological texture is presented in chapter six, pp. 192–236.

has to do with how the structure of a text and its narrational patterns produce arguments.³³ An analysis of structure, narration, rhetoric, and so on, is relevant for an inner texture analysis. However, it is important to underline that an inner texture analysis is not concerned with language or information outside of the text. It is strictly text immanent,³⁴ and it analyses structure, argumentative patterns, rhetoric, literary devices, and so forth. Robbins identifies five categories of inner texture: repetitive-progressive texture, opening-middle-closing texture, narrational texture, argumentative texture and sensory-aesthetic texture. I shall in the interpretation of Jas 2:1–13 focus on the argumentative texture of the textual unit. Throughout chapter five this analysis will be labelled ‘inner texture’ and the focus will be on the rhetorical pattern that builds the argument of that particular textual unit.

Intertexture

The intertexture of texts has to do with the observation that it is not only the author and reader that are involved in the production of texts, but other texts as well.³⁵ This is the concept of intertextuality where one can say that every text is a rewriting of other texts. Its meaning is not independent, and

the act of reading [...] plunges us into a network of textual relations. To interpret a text, to discover its meaning, or meanings, is to trace those relations. Reading thus becomes a process of moving between texts.³⁶

For Robbins the intertexture of texts means “the relation of data in the text to various kinds of phenomena outside the text”.³⁷

But cultural, social and historical phenomena are also in texts, and intertextual interpreters perceive them to be present in a ‘textualized’ form—that is, in an ordered, patterned and structured form related to language. This nature of a text is its intertexture. Texts stand in a dynamic relation to phenomena outside them.³⁸

The quotation above mentions a text’s relationship to historical, social and cultural phenomena, but let us start with the obvious, the relation a text from the Bible has with other biblical texts. Robbins calls this the

³³ Ibid., 46.

³⁴ Ibid., 29.

³⁵ Ibid., 30.

³⁶ Graham Allen, *Intertextuality*, The New Critical Idiom (London: Routledge, 2000), 1.

³⁷ Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 96.

³⁸ Ibid., 32.

oral-scribal intertexture.³⁹ The point is of course that a biblical text is not independent of other biblical texts. On the contrary, any biblical text is in dialogue with other texts from the Bible. This can be seen both as direct quotations, and also as echoes of texts or theology. At the same time, the biblical texts were produced and read in a specific cultural context, and therefore intertexture also reflects culture. Robbins calls this cultural intertexture, i.e. a) reference to a personage or tradition known to people in a culture, or b) the echo of a cultural tradition.⁴⁰ Cultural intertexture is the textualised form of culture, so to speak. It is what we can read in a text about a culture, without using the tools from the social sciences. Social intertexture is also related to this as it investigates social phenomena in a text.⁴¹ These are the observations we can make without using the tools from the social sciences. However, to understand these observations we very often have to use tools from the social sciences, and that is what Robbins calls social and cultural texture. I shall come back to this. Historical intertexture is according to Robbins a kind of intertexture that

‘textualizes’ past experience into ‘a particular event’ or ‘a particular period of time’. Historical intertexture differs from social intertexture by its focus on a particular event or period of time rather than social practices that occur regularly as events in one’s life.⁴²

Put in a different way one can say that historical intertexture occurs when a text refers to historical phenomena, such as e.g. Luke 2:1, which refers to the decree by the emperor Augustus that “all the world should be registered”.

In my interpretation of Jas 2:1–13 the intertextual analysis shall be done through a focus on oral-scribal intertexture and on cultural intertexture. For reasons of simplicity I am calling Robbins’ oral-scribal intertexture just intertexture.

Social and Cultural Texture

It may be somewhat confusing to try to delineate the difference between social and cultural intertexture and social and cultural texture. The easiest explanation concerning the difference between them is that social and cultural texture differs from social and cultural *intertexture* in the sense that it uses “anthropological and sociological theory to explore the social

³⁹ Ibid., 97–108.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 108–115.

⁴¹ Ibid., 115–118.

⁴² Ibid., 118. The whole presentation of historical intertexture can be read on pp. 118–120.

and cultural nature of the voices in the text under investigation".⁴³ In other words one can say that social and cultural texture does not look at the textualised witnesses of culture and society, but uses the full range of tools known from the social sciences in an analysis of the societies and cultures in which the texts of the Bible were written. This is what the social-scientific critics of the Bible have done, and Bruce Malina is a typical exponent for social and cultural texture work in relation to the Bible.⁴⁴ Analysis of social and cultural texture has given us "insights into honor and shame culture, patronage, hospitality, health systems, relation of countryside to cities, purity systems, etc."⁴⁵

Ideological Texture

According to Robbins, ideology "concerns the particular ways in which our speech and action, in their social and cultural location, relate to and interconnect with resources, structures and institutions of power".⁴⁶ Thus there may be both an ideology *in* the text and an ideology *of* the text.⁴⁷ The ideology *in* the text may be understood as the original author's intended ideology, whereas the ideology *of* the text is the ideology that the text communicates to us as readers. This latter may be seen as the ideology of traditions of interpretation or as the ideology of intellectual discourse.⁴⁸ Within postcolonial biblical criticism one of the main concerns has been to analyse and decolonise Western traditions of interpretation. That is of course because there is ideology in traditions of interpretation and this ideology has had a relation to institutions of power. I have earlier said that I shall not focus on this part of postcolonial analysis, however in this context it is important to be aware that it is most relevant for an analysis of ideological texture. Postcolonial criticism is also very relevant when we look at the part of ideological texture that concerns the ideology of intellectual discourse. This is where feminist analysis comes into the picture, as do liberation theological analysis, black theology, postcolonial criticism, and so on. Therefore I understand my postcolonial optic on Jas 2:1–13 as ideological texture.

⁴³ Ibid., 144.

⁴⁴ Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, (Louisville: Westminster, 1993).

⁴⁵ Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 36.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 37.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 200ff and 207ff.

CHAPTER ONE

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES—PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

The isagogics concerning the Epistle of James is highly debated. Who was the author? When was the Epistle written? In what situation was it written? To whom was it written? Which theological traditions form the background for the Epistle? Excellent reviews of the introductory questions concerning the Epistle of James have been presented by several scholars, see e.g. Wiard Popkes,¹ Douglas J. Moo,² David Hutchinson Edgar,³ Luke Timothy Johnson,⁴ Sophie Laws⁵ and Wesley Hiram Wachob.⁶ It is my aim in this chapter to give a brief overview over the most prominent views concerning isagogics and to situate my own study in this context of research.

For a historical interpretation of the Epistle of James, the most important introductory question concerns the date of the authorship. If one can show with some probability a certain time of writing and subsequent reading of the Epistle, this is of course decisive with regard to identifying and describing the historical situation of the Epistle. In a historical study this is clearly significant for the interpretation. Concerning the Epistle of James, author and time of authorship are very closely linked. Therefore I shall treat these two questions together. There are two main views on time and authorship: a) early dating, i.e. before 60 C.E., possibly as early as 40 C.E., and the brother of the Lord as author, or b) late dating, i.e. late first century C.E., and a pseudepigraphic authorship. Those who argue

¹ Wiard Popkes, *Adressaten, Situation und Form des Jakobusbriefes*, SBS, vol. 125/126 (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk GmbH, 1986). The entire monograph concerns introductory questions.

² Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James*, ed. D.A. Carson, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 6–47.

³ David Hutchinson Edgar, *Has God not Chosen the Poor? The Social Setting of the Epistle of James*, JSNTSup, vol. 206 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 13–43.

⁴ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Letter of James*, AB, vol. 37A (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 3–123.

⁵ Sophie Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, BNTC (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1980), 1–43.

⁶ Wesley Hiram Wachob, *The voice of Jesus in the social rhetoric of James*, SNTSMS, vol. 106 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1–24.

that the brother of the Lord was the author also argue an early dating of the Epistle, as James the brother of the Lord died in 62 C.E. Those who argue for the Epistle being a pseudepigraphic writing argue for a late dating. I shall come back to an overview over these two main views. There is no dispute over the observation that the Epistle has a close link to James the brother of the Lord,⁷ however for some he is the actual author, while for others the link is that of a commitment to the theological tradition from James the brother of the Lord.

Second, the audience is of great importance to an interpretation. If one can pinpoint an audience from one specific city, it is of course even more helpful for the process of saying something about the historical situation. For the Epistle of James this is not the case. It is quite clear from the address of the Epistle that it is written to multiple audiences outside of Palestine. Therefore I shall not pinpoint one specific historical situation and city for the Epistle. It is more relevant how life in a Roman city looked, and this shall be elaborated in chapter four. In this present chapter, however, I shall situate the biblical text in the Empire in the sense that I shall show how any text, biblical or other, would be influenced by the omnipresent Roman Empire. In chapter four I shall elaborate generally on the Roman Empire, therefore the considerations at this point shall be brief.

Other introductory questions are questions about genre, theological background and the relation between Jas 2:1–13 and the rest of the Epistle. I shall briefly investigate these questions as well in this chapter, as they carry inner- and intertextual importance.

AUTHOR AND TIME

What do we know about the author of the Epistle? We know that he must have been a Jewish Christian. We know that the Epistle has been linked to the name of James. The linking of the Epistle to the name of James obviously gives it the necessary authority, hence there is only one James among the five we meet in the New Testament,⁸ that can be considered,

⁷ See Popkes, *Adressaten, Situation und Form des Jakobusbriefes*, 31: "Die Angabe über 'Jakobus' in 1,1 deutet nach allgemeiner Ansicht auf den Herrenbruder, auch wenn der Brief erst aus seiner 'Schule' oder anderen Kreisen stammen sollte."

⁸ In addition to James the brother of the Lord, there are James the son of Zebedee (Mark 1:19; 3:17; Acts 12:2), James son of Alphaeus (Mark 3:18), James the younger (Mark 15:40) and James the father of the apostle Judas (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13). If the dating of the Epistle is as early as 40 C.E. James the son of Zebedee could also be the author. He was

and that is the brother of the Lord. Jesus Christ appeared to him after the resurrection (1 Cor 15:7); he was the leader of the Jerusalem Church (Acts 12:17; 21:18; Gal 1:17–19; 2:7–9) and as such played a decisive role at the meeting of the apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 15); according to Josephus, *Ant.* 20.200–201, he died in 62 C.E.;⁹ and he was in later tradition considered the first bishop of Jerusalem.¹⁰ The question is whether the Epistle is a pseudepigraph or actually written by James the brother of the Lord. As I have already mentioned, there are two trends linking the authorship and time of authorship closely together. I shall now present the main arguments for both views and conclude with my own view on the matter.

Early Dating and James the Brother of the Lord as Author

Those who argue in favour of an early dating of the Epistle of James, also argue that this is one of the earliest writings of the New Testament as a whole. Their main arguments are:

The Self-Presentation of the Author

The self-presentation in Jas 1:1 gives the Epistle its authority. As I have mentioned already, there is really only one James known to us with that kind of authority and he is the brother of the Lord. It is also clear that the author presumes that his readers know him, and again, there is only one James that would be commonly known and whose authority would be commonly recognised, namely James the brother of the Lord. Most

one of the three disciples closest to Jesus (Matt 26:36; 27:56) and if the Epistle was written as early as 40 C.E. this would have been before his martyrdom under Agrippa I, see Acts 12:2. A second possibility in the case of such an early dating could be James son of Alphaeus, see Franz Mussner, *Der Jakobusbrief*, 2. ed., HTKNT, vol. XIII (Freiburg: Herder, 1967), 7. However, a dating as early as 40 C.E. is not common among researchers who argue an early dating of the Epistle, hence James the brother of the Lord is the person left with enough authority.

⁹ James “the brother of Jesus who was called the Christ” (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.200) died according to Josephus in the year when Festus died and Caesar sent Albinus as procurator of Judea. The high priesthood was given to Ananus, son of Ananus who had also been high priest, and Ananus was the one who brought James before the Sanhedrin, see *Ant.* 20.197–203 in Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, trans. Louis H. Feldman, LCL, vol. X (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965). For investigations of the historical James, see e.g. Patrick J. Hartin, *James of Jerusalem: Heir to Jesus of Nazareth*, Interfaces (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1989); John Painter, *Just James: The Brother of Jesus in History and Tradition* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999). There are also several valuable contributions in Bruce Chilton and Craig Evans, eds., *The Missions of James, Peter, and Paul: Tensions in Early Christianity*, NovTSup, vol. 115 (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

¹⁰ See Moo, *The Letter of James*, 16.

interpreters mention this argument as the most prominent argument for an early dating of the Epistle.¹¹ Those who after all do not conclude with an early dating of the Epistle understand the self-presentation as a pseudonym and the Epistle as a pseudepigraphic writing.¹² Even if the author was not James the brother of the Lord, it is obviously important for the author of the Epistle to link to the theological tradition from James.

Closeness to the Jesus Tradition

Many scholars argue that the closeness to the Jesus tradition and to primitive Christian theology, yet without direct quotations from Jesus, is an indication that the author of the Epistle of James was the brother of Jesus.¹³ The author is obviously not using written sources when referring to the Jesus tradition. Hence, he must have been a person close to Jesus, and when the self-presentation says 'James' this they argue, is an indication of the brother of Jesus as the author.

Closeness to the Heritage of Israel

The author of James shows familiarity with the traditions of Israel and the Hebrew wisdom tradition. This has by Patrick J. Hartin been used as an argument for James the brother of the Lord as the author.¹⁴

The Relation to Paul

Franz Mussner argues that the anti-Pauline front of the Epistle is an argument for the brother of the Lord as the author.¹⁵ It has to be said in this context that most interpreters of the Epistle of James list this as an argument for a late dating and against James the brother of the Lord as author.¹⁶

¹¹ See e.g. Martin Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 11th ed., KEK (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), 23f; Werner Georg Kümmel, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 20th ed. (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1980), 363; Mussner, *Der Jakobusbrief*, 7; Patrick J. Hartin, *James*, SP, vol. 14 (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2003), 21 and 24.

¹² According to Sophie Laws, this was familiar both in Jewish and Graeco-Roman writing, see Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 41.

¹³ See e.g. Moo, *The Letter of James*, 11, and Hartin, *James*, 22, who both argue an early dating and the brother of the Lord as author. See also Kümmel, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 364. Even though Kümmel concludes with a later dating of the Epistle and not the brother of the Lord as author, he lists this argument as one of the important ones for an early dating.

¹⁴ Hartin, *James*, 21 and 24.

¹⁵ Mussner, *Der Jakobusbrief*, 7.

¹⁶ Most interpreters see the negative relation to Paul as an argument for late dating because they consider this in relation to the chronology of Paul's writings. The anti-Pauline front presupposes that the author knew Paul's writings, hence the Epistle of James must

However, Mussner lists this argument in a context where he asks whether the author is James the brother of the Lord or James son of Alphaeus and in this particular context it makes sense that the negative attitude towards Paul is an argument for James the brother of the Lord as an author rather than James son of Alphaeus. In addition to Mussner, Martin Hengel and Patrick J. Hartin also understand the relation to Paul as an argument for an early dating of the Epistle. Hengel's thesis is that the Epistle of James is anti-Pauline polemic and most likely was written between 58 and 62 C.E.¹⁷ Hartin does not agree that there is a negative relationship between James and Paul, however he does see their relation as an argument for an early dating of the Epistle. Concerning for example the relationship between faith and works, Hartin is of the opinion that Paul's and James' theologies are not in conflict with each other, but address different aspects. Therefore the difference between James and Paul does not constitute an argument against early dating and against the brother of the Lord as author, but instead leaves open the possibility that the Epistle may have been written at an early dating by James the brother of the Lord.¹⁸

No References to Gentiles

There is a total lack of references to Gentiles in the Epistle of James. According to Hartin this would be somewhat odd if the Epistle was written in the late first century. At that point in time there would be both Gentiles and Jews in any Christian congregation, and he presumes that the Gentiles would have been mentioned given that the letter was written at that time. Hence, the lack of references to Gentiles becomes an argument in favour of an early dating of the Epistle.¹⁹

No Reference to the Destruction of the Temple

Hartin further lists the lack of reference to the destruction of the Temple as a similar argument as the one above concerning no mention of Gentiles.²⁰ The destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in the year 70 C.E. was such a massive event and turning point that one should, according to Hartin, expect it to be mentioned if the Epistle was written later than that.

have been written after the Pauline epistles, see e.g. Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 31, and Kümmel, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 364.

¹⁷ See Martin Hengel, "Der Jakobusbrief als antipaulinische Polemik" in *Paulus und Jakobus: Kleine Schriften III*, ed. Martin Hengel, WUNT, 141 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 523.

¹⁸ Hartin, *James*, 22.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

The Circumstances in the Epistle Reflect the Time of James the Brother of the Lord

Both Pedrito U. Maynard-Reid and Douglas J. Moo argue that the time reflected in the Epistle is closer to James the brother of the Lord than to the late first century.²¹ Moo argues that at the time of James the brother of the Lord, the Jewish-Christian readers would have left Palestine. They would be in a situation facing economic distress and persecution as there was famine and economic distress in the Middle East in the mid-first century.²²

Similarities to James' Speech in Acts 15:13–21

A last argument for James the brother of the Lord as author that Moo puts forward is that there are suggestive similarities concerning wording between the Epistle of James and James the brother of the Lord's speech in Acts 15:13–21, and also between the Epistle of James and the letter sent by the brother of the Lord to the Gentile Christians in northern Syria and southern Asia Minor (Acts 15:23–29).²³ However, Moo underlines that these similarities do not prove "common authorship, but they are suggestive".²⁴

Assessment of the Arguments Considering Early Dating

Among these eight arguments for early dating and James the brother of the Lord as author, the two first, i.e. the self-presentation of the author and his closeness to the Jesus tradition, are the weightiest arguments. Closeness to the heritage of Israel is an argument for authorship by a person who is Jewish-Christian, but not a strong argument for the brother of the Lord as an author. The relation to Paul is also difficult to use both as an argument for early dating and for late dating. It is a common view that James is anti-Pauline. This view has however been challenged, as Hartin shows. Therefore I will not use this as an argument either for early dating, or for late dating. The total lack of reference to Gentiles that Hartin suggests may not be as complete as it seems from his point of view. I will show in my exegesis of Jas 2:1–13 that there is reference to Roman imperial

²¹ Pedrito U. Maynard-Reid, *Poverty and Wealth in James* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987), 8; Moo, *The Letter of James*, 10.

²² Moo, *The Letter of James*, 10f. This seems like a somewhat imprecise argument by Moo.

²³ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

cultural etiquette in James, as well as reference to a representative of the Roman Empire. He would hardly have been a Jew. The lack of reference to the destruction of the Temple, however, may be a stronger argument for an early dating of the Epistle. That the circumstances in the Epistle reflect the time when the brother of the Lord would be writing, is also debated. Other scholars would consider the circumstances to fit better with a later dating of the Epistle and say that it reflects a late first-century context.²⁵ This point of view fits better with the sources than the view of Moo and Maynard-Reid. The similarities to James' speech and the subsequent letter in Acts 15 are, as Moo himself says, suggestive. However, it is hardly a weighty argument. Therefore I conclude that the first two arguments, the self-presentation of the author and the closeness to the Jesus tradition, are the weightiest in favour of an early dating of the Epistle and of the brother of the Lord as author. Let me now present the main arguments for a late dating and a pseudonymous author.

Late Dating and a Pseudonymous Author

Those who argue for dating the Epistle to the late first century also argue a pseudonymous authorship. They do not dispute the strong linking of the Epistle to James the brother of the Lord; however, they understand this as the pseudonymous author linking his letter to the theological tradition of the brother of the Lord and to some extent claiming to be the brother of the Lord. Their main arguments are:

Relation to Pauline Theology

Although disputed, it has been a prominent view within Jamesian research that there is an anti-Pauline front in the Epistle of James. This is especially seen in James' theology on faith and works, which is understood as opposing Paul's view on the same issue. This understanding of the relation between James and Paul presupposes that the author of James knew Pauline theology. It also presupposes not only that James knew Paul's thoughts, but that Paul's theology was commonly known among the Christian congregations. For this to be the case, the Epistle of James

²⁵ Bo Reicke is one of the scholars who argue for this, see the general introduction in Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, xxiii.

had to have been written chronologically after the Pauline epistles, and therefore after the death of James the brother of the Lord.²⁶

The Language of the Epistle

The Greek of the Epistle is very good and according to those who argue a late dating, it cannot have been written by a person whose native language was not Greek. Greek would not have been the native language of the brother of the Lord since he most likely lived in Palestine. Hence, he cannot have been the author of the Epistle.²⁷

Canon History

It took quite a long time before the Epistle of James was generally recognised as written by the brother of the Lord and by virtue of this considered apostolic. Not until its apostolicity was accepted was it included in the Christian canon. This canon process is seen as an argument against early dating of the Epistle.²⁸ Reicke says, with reference to Eusebius *Hist. Eccl.* ii,

²⁶ Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 31; Kümmel, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 364. Both Moo and Hartin also list this as a significant argument although they both disagree with the conclusion, see Moo, *The Letter of James*, 18ff, and Hartin, *James*, 23.

²⁷ Dibelius sees this as one of the main arguments for a late dating of the Epistle, see Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 31. So do Kümmel and Popkes, see Kümmel, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 364; Popkes, *Adressaten, Situation und Form des Jakobusbriefes*, 33. Martin Hengel has through his research on the Hellenisation of Judea made a strong counter-argument against Dibelius', and others', view. Their argument presupposes that use of the Greek language was not widespread in Judea in the first century C.E., and that the brother of the Lord would not be a native Greek speaker. However, Hengel's research has shown that both Greek language and education were widespread in Judea and that there was a high percentage of native Greek-speaking Jews in the area. This was especially the case for Jerusalem, which was considered a metropolis of international significance, see Martin Hengel, *The 'Hellenization' of Judaea in the First Century after Christ*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM, 1989), 7–29, specifically p. 11 on Jerusalem as an international metropolis. Mussner, Moo and Hartin also list the language as one of the main arguments for a late dating of the Epistle; however, they do not conclude with a late dating themselves, see Mussner, *Der Jakobusbrief*, 7; Moo, *The Letter of James*, 14; Hartin, *James*, 23. Moo points out that the Greek is good, but not as eloquent as literary Greek should be, and second, Hartin points out that new research shows that use of the Greek language was widespread also in the eastern parts of the Empire, hence one could expect that a native of Palestine would know Greek very well, contrary to what earlier researchers have thought, see Hartin, *James*, 22f.

²⁸ Kümmel, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 364. The Epistle of James is not mentioned in Canon Muratori, nor is it mentioned by Tertullian, Cyprian, Irenaeus or Hippolyt as part of the Christian writings. The first time the Epistle of James is mentioned as part of the Christian canon is after 200 C.E. in Palestine and Egypt. It is mentioned by Origen and in the letter *De virginitate*, which was falsely credited to Clement Romanus. Eusebius reckoned James under the *Antilegomena*. In addition the papyrus p20 from the third century C.E. contains a part of the Epistle, namely Jas 2:19–3:9. In the Greek church the Epistle

23,24ff, that the early church did not recognise the brother of the Lord as the author.²⁹ If the brother of the Lord really was the author, there would have been no dispute about the Epistle's apostolicity.

Social Relations and Culture Reflected in the Epistle

The social relations and culture reflected in the Epistle are those of the late first century, according to both Reicke and Popkes.³⁰ Reicke is of the opinion that the situation reflected in James seems to be that of the reign of Domitian. Domitian was emperor from 81 until 96 C.E., and Reicke argues a dating of the Epistle of James towards the end of Domitian's reign because of the references to persecution in James. The Christians were not generally persecuted until the end of the reign of Domitian.³¹ Popkes says, "Die verschiedenen anderen Faktoren—insbesondere soziale Verhältnisse, Sprachkultur, Beziehungen zu anderen Traditionen im Neuen Testament—lassen sich leichter in eine relative Später-Datierung einordnen als in eine Frühdatierung."³²

Much in Common with Especially 1 Clement

1 Clem was probably written in Rome in 95 C.E., according to Reicke.³³ The Epistle of James has much in common with 1 Clem both concerning the situation reflected and concerning theology. The Epistle of James also has a lot in common with 2 Peter, Jude and Hebrews. Given that these Epistles were written towards the end of the first century, this is an argument for a late dating of the Epistle of James.³⁴ All this constitutes one of Reicke's arguments for a late dating of the Epistle of James.

of James was accepted at the church synod of Laodicea in 360 C.E. and in the West the Epistle was acknowledged in the synod of Rome in 382 and the synod of Carthage in 397, see Kümmel, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 357.

²⁹ See Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, 4, who refers to Eusebius on this point.

³⁰ Ibid., xxiii; Popkes, *Adressaten, Situation und Form des Jakobusbriefes*, 33.

³¹ Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, 5.

³² Popkes, *Adressaten, Situation und Form des Jakobusbriefes*, 33.

³³ Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, xxiv. Odd Magne Bakke considers the traditional view on dating of 1 Clem to be between 93 and 96 C.E., see Odd Magne Bakke, "Concord and Peace": *A Rhetorical Analysis of the First Letter of Clement with an Emphasis on the Language of Unity and Sedition*, WUNT, vol. 141 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 9; however, he himself concludes that it is difficult to "operate with a safe and accurate date of the letter", see p. 11.

³⁴ There is a broad scholarly debate concerning the dating of these Epistles as well.

The Understanding of the Law

It seems that the understanding of the Law in the Epistle of James is more ethical than cultic-ritual.³⁵ However, one would expect James the brother of the Lord, who was a law-abiding Jew, to focus not only on the ethical part of the Law but also on the cultic-ritual part of it. It is especially the Law of liberty in Jas 1:25 that seems to be a problem if James the brother of the Lord was the author of the Epistle.³⁶

The Author does not Mention His Relationship to Jesus

If the author was the brother of the Lord, this gives the Epistle its authority. One would expect the author, then, at least to mention this very prominent link to Jesus himself. However, he does not make a point of being Jesus' brother at all, and this is often understood as an argument against the brother of the Lord as the author and in favour of a pseudonymous authorship.³⁷ Those who argue a late dating of the Epistle of James also argue that the author of the Epistle uses James as a pseudonym.³⁸ This means that the Epistle was written by an anonymous author under the pseudonym of a well-known person. This was done not necessarily to deceive the readers of the Epistle, but to link it to a larger theological tradition. The use of a pseudonym by the author was known both in Jewish and Graeco-Roman writings.³⁹

Assessment of the Arguments Considering Late Dating

Among the seven arguments above in favour of a late dating and a pseudonymous author the first two concerning the relation to Paul and the language of the Epistle are the ones commonly understood to be the weightiest. However, I find that it is difficult to use the relation to Paul as

³⁵ See Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 31; Kümmel, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 364; Moo, *The Letter of James*, 15ff.

³⁶ Dibelius uses this as one of his main arguments against the brother of the Lord as the author, see Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 31f.

³⁷ Kümmel, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 364; Moo, *The Letter of James*, 13f.

³⁸ See e.g. Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 33; Kümmel, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 364f; Popkes, *Adressaten, Situation und Form des Jakobusbriefes*, 31–41.

³⁹ Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 41. David G. Mead writes about pseudonymous authorship in Jewish tradition that "we can conclude that in the prophetic, wisdom, and apocalyptic traditions, literary attribution is primarily an assertion of authoritative tradition, not literary origins," see David G. Meade, *Pseudonymity and Canon: An Investigation into the Relationship of Authorship and Authority in Jewish and Earliest Christian Tradition*, WUNT, vol. 39 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986), 105. Mead has found the same to be the case for pseudonymous authorship in the New Testament, see pp. 190–193.

an argument as long as that relation is fairly disputed. The considerations concerning language are also hard to use as arguments since Hengel and Hartin has shown convincingly that Greek was commonly known in Palestine in the first century. Therefore I consider the weightiest arguments concerning a late dating of the Epistle to be canon history and the social relations and culture reflected in the Epistle. The observation that the Epistle has much in common with 1 Clement, 2 Peter, Jude and Hebrews, all possibly written in the late first century, does strengthen the case for a late dating of the Epistle. The lack of reference to Jesus on the other hand is from my point of view not a strong argument for a late dating of the Epistle. First, the brother of the Lord had his authority because he was an apostle. Therefore he did not have to boast about his relation to Jesus and in other places in the New Testament where we meet him, e.g. Acts 15, he does not do so either. Second, the connection to the Jesus-tradition in the Epistle of James is overwhelmingly strong. Hence, there is really no lack of reference to Jesus.

Conclusion: Date and Authorship

In sum, I find that there are strong arguments both for an early and a late dating of the Epistle. I hold the author's self-presentation and the closeness to the Jesus tradition as the weightiest arguments for an early dating of the Epistle. On the other hand, I consider the social relations and culture reflected in the Epistle to be more in accord with the late first-century situation for the Christians than with the mid-first-century situation. In addition, the fact that the Epistle of James was considered part of the Christian canon relatively late does not point to the brother of the Lord as an author.

These two observations combined with pseudonymous authorship being relatively common lead me to conclude that the Epistle of James was most probably written pseudonymously in the late first century C.E. However, I do find the arguments for an early dating strong as well, and therefore I should underline that from my point of view it is in principle very hard, maybe impossible to find a historically correct dating for many of the texts of the Bible, the Epistle of James included. Frustrating as it may be for a historian, we therefore have to work with historical probabilities rather than historical facts.

The choice one makes concerning author and dating of course has interpretative consequences. The choice I have made has the consequence that I shall investigate Jas 2:1–13 under the condition that the Epistle was

probably written in the late first century C.E. Starting from this premise, I shall ask: what is a probable interpretation of Jas 2:1–13?

Location of the Author

Although I have concluded that the author of the Epistle of James is not James the brother of the Lord, I agree with those who argue an early dating concerning location of the author. As I have shown above, an early dating also assumes James the brother of the Lord as the author, and we know that he was the head of the Jerusalem assembly, presiding in Jerusalem. I have concluded with a pseudonymous authorship of the Epistle of James; however, the self-presentation of the author obviously gives the Epistle its necessary authority. Therefore it at least seems that the author is trying to give the impression that he is writing from Jerusalem, as James the brother of the Lord would have done. The whole address in Jas 1:1 creates an impression of movement from James in Jerusalem to the Christians in the diaspora.

The question is whether the author is not only giving the impression of writing from Jerusalem, but is actually writing from Jerusalem. The Epistle itself does not give a more exact answer to that question than what I have already presented. In addition it is obvious, especially in Jas 2:1–13, that the author wants to bring the addressees back to their Jewish-Christian heritage and he is most definitely a Jewish Christian himself. At the same time it is obvious that the language of the Epistle is that of a native Greek-speaking person. Dibelius draws the conclusion that “[A]uch die Sprache unseres Textes deutet nicht auf einen Verf., der als Jude in Palästina sein Leben zubringt.”⁴⁰ Hengel’s research has shown that this is no argument against Palestine or even Jerusalem as the location of the author. He argues that Jerusalem was widely influenced by Greek language and that there was a considerable number of Jews in Jerusalem that had Greek as their native language.⁴¹ Against this background it is reasonable to say that the pseudonymous author of the Epistle of James could have written from Jerusalem. Although we cannot conclude that he was actually writing from Jerusalem, the impression he made was that he was writing from Jerusalem. This is as likely a location as any other.

⁴⁰ Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 31.

⁴¹ See Hengel, *The ‘Hellenization’ of Judaea in the First Century after Christ*, 9f.

ADDRESSEES

The first point of departure concerning the addressees of the Epistle of James is the address in Jas 1:1,

Ἰάκωβος θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ δοῦλος ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ χαίρειν.

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.⁴²

This is a universal address not focusing on any specific Christian assembly in any specific city. Hence, one has to conclude that the Epistle of James has a general character and was intended to be read not only in one Christian assembly but in several. That the term dispersion/diaspora is used also indicates that those who received the Epistle did not live in Judea, but elsewhere in the Empire. Given that the Epistle had multiple addressees around the Empire one also has to conclude that the issues raised in the Epistle had a universal application.⁴³ When the author wrote an epistle to multiple Christian assemblies, he would raise issues that many of them recognised. The general character of the Epistle and the admonitions should be understood against this background. They are universal, most Christians would recognise them and feel concerned about them, and there would be a general need to address these issues.

A second point of departure concerning those who received the Epistle of James is what we can find out about them from the contents of the Epistle. We must assume that the issues addressed in the Epistle are recognisable to them. From this we can conclude that the addressees are familiar with trials (Jas 1:2–4 and 2:6b–7), that they are oppressed or at least are familiar with oppression (Jas 2:6b–7) and that some of them are even oppressors themselves (Jas 2:4–7 and 5:4–6). They are familiar with poor and humble people, orphans and widows, and some of them may even be in that category. They live in cities of some size since the example of an equestrian visiting the assembly is meaningful to them (Jas 2:2–4).⁴⁴

⁴² Unless otherwise indicated, I shall use the *NRSV* (New Revised Standard Version, Oxford University Press, 1995) when citing the Bible.

⁴³ In agreement with Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 6.

⁴⁴ In chapter five I shall show that the Christian assemblies could very well be understood to be voluntary associations within the Empire. In a city of some size the voluntary associations would be important during elections as candidates would try to gather votes through keeping good relations to the various associations. This might be one reason for a visit by an equestrian to the Jewish-Christian assembly of Jas 2:1–13.

They know internal conflicts (Jas 4:1–3), and some of them are rich businessmen (Jas 4:13–17 and 5:1–6).

Although Jesus Christ is only directly mentioned in 1:1 and 2:1, the addressees are clearly Christian.⁴⁵ The very strong link to the Jesus tradition (see the section below on ‘Theological background’) makes this evident. Further, the theological background of the Jewish wisdom tradition also shows us that the addressees knew their Jewish theological heritage. From this we can conclude that the assemblies addressed were Christian assemblies, and many of the addressees were probably Jews living in the diaspora, who were also Christians. Since the recipients of the Epistle were probably situated around the Empire we can also conclude that the cultural context of the addressees was heterogeneous and that the assemblies, although predominantly Jewish-Christian, were also likely to be heterogeneous.

⁴⁵ Some scholars have suggested that the Epistle of James was not a Christian treatise at all, but a ‘Christianised’ Jewish treatise. The main reason for this view seems to be that Jesus Christ is only mentioned in Jas 1:1 and 2:1, that the address in Jas 1:1 is ‘to the twelve tribes of the diaspora’, that the Epistle focuses on the Law and on wisdom tradition, and that the term ‘synagogue’ is used in James 2, see Dale C. Allison, “The Fiction of James and its *Sitz im Leben*,” *RB* 118 (2001), 534f; Moo, *The Letter of James*, 12. A very good overview of this view can be found in Allison, “The Fiction of James and its *Sitz im Leben*,” 529–553. See in addition the overview in John S. Kloppenborg, “The Reception of the Jesus Tradition in James,” in *The Catholic Epistles and the Tradition*, ed. J. Schlosser, BETL, (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004), 95f. John S. Kloppenborg argued something similar in his main paper at the SNTS general meeting in Aberdeen in July 2006. He argued that the Epistle of James was addressed to Judeans of the Diaspora, who may have included members of the Jesus movement. The paper was published in *NTS*, see John S. Kloppenborg, “Diaspora Discourse: The Construction of *Ethos* in James,” *NTS* 53 (2007). For his specific arguments, see pp. 251–255. Kloppenborg specifically underlines, though, that he does not see grounds to eliminate κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ in Jas 1:1, see p. 251. Moo’s argument against this view, and I must add that I agree with him, is that no other epistle in the New Testament has such a strong link to the Jesus tradition. The numerous references to the Jesus tradition make it evident that this is a Christian letter and not a Jewish epistle. As mentioned above, other arguments for the view that this is a Christianised Jewish epistle could be that the address is to the ‘twelve tribes in the dispersion’, the focus on the Law and on wisdom tradition, and that the term ‘synagogue’ is used about the assembly in James 2. However, in terms of arguing against the specific Christian message of the Epistle, these arguments do not overcome the strong link to the Jesus tradition. Therefore I conclude, as most scholars have done, that the Epistle of James is a letter to Christian assemblies.

INNER TEXTURE, GENRE AND THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Inner Texture

As several relatively recent commentators on the Epistle of James have observed, there is a clear relation between James 1 and the rest of the Epistle.⁴⁶ In this first chapter of the letter, the readers/hearers are introduced to the main topics of the Epistle. However, Laws, Johnson, Moo and Hartin all only touch briefly on the relation between chapter one and the rest of the Epistle. Moo's short comment to this is typical: "The opening section announces the key themes of the letter; structurally, therefore, each of the topics that James takes up can be attached to one of the brief exhortations found in 1:2–18."⁴⁷ Due to the briefness of the investigations of the relation between James 1 and the rest of the Epistle, I shall reflect further upon this relation in the following sections. I shall also combine my observations about this relation with Ernst Baasland's rhetorical analysis of the Epistle of James and through this propose a structure of the Epistle of James as a whole.

Trials, Testing, Temptation and Endurance—πειρασμός, δοκίμιον and ὑπομονή

² My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials (πειρασμοί) of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, ³ because you know that the testing (δοκίμιον) of your faith produces endurance (ὑπομονή); ⁴ and let endurance (ὑπομονή) have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.

¹² Blessed is anyone who endures temptation (ὑπομονέω πειρασμόν). Such a one has stood the test (δόκιμος) and will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. ¹³ No one, when tempted (πειράζομαι), should say, "I am being tempted (πειράζομαι) by God"; for God cannot be tempted (ἀπείραστος) by evil and he himself tempts (πειράζω) no one. ¹⁴ But one is tempted (πειράζομαι) by one's own desire, being lured and enticed by it; ¹⁵ then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death.

(Jas 1:2–4, 12–15)

After the opening of the Epistle, trials, testing of the faith and endurance are the first issues addressed, first in Jas 1:2–4, second in Jas 1:12–15. They

⁴⁶ See e.g. Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 26f; Johnson, *The Letter of James*, 14f; Moo, *The Letter of James*, 44; and Hartin, *James*, 28f.

⁴⁷ Moo, *The Letter of James*, 44.

are all linked together, and judging by the way these issues are presented, it seems that the recipients of the letter are no strangers to them. The author tries to motivate his readers to stand through the testing of their faith, the trials and the temptations, because this will produce endurance. In 2:6b–7 and 5:7–11 the issue is repeated and developed further. In the passage in chapter two, oppression is what constitutes the trials, testing and temptation, and in chapter five it is concluded that those who showed endurance are called blessed. Hence, the issue of trials, testing, temptation and endurance is found in James 1, 2 and 5.

Wisdom, Prayer and Good/Perfect Gift from Above—σοφία/σοφός, αἰτέω and δόσις ἀγαθή/δῶρημα τέλειον ἄνωθεν

⁵ If any of you is lacking in wisdom (σοφία), ask (αἰτέω) God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you.

¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved. ¹⁷ Every generous act of giving (δόσις ἀγαθή), with every perfect gift (δῶρημα τέλειον), is from above (ἄνωθεν), coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. ¹⁸ In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

(Jas 1:5, 16–18)

The issue of wisdom is presented in Jas 1:5 and 1:16–18. The next encounter with this issue is in Jas 3:13–18. In 3:13 wisdom and works are presented as something belonging together. In Jas 3:14–16 the contrast to wisdom from God is presented as bitter envy and selfish ambition. In Jas 3:17–18 the wisdom is presented as from above, i.e. from God. This is why I consider Jas 1:16–18 as relevant to the issue of wisdom in James. Jas 1:17 says that every perfect gift is from above, and in 3:17 the wisdom is presented as one of these gifts. Further in Jas 3:17–18, the wisdom is presented as pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, containing no partiality or hypocrisy. Jas 3:17–18 represents the key verses to an understanding of the whole Epistle of James. The values in these verses on the one hand stand in strong contrast with some of the actions of the recipients of the letter, e.g. partiality in Jas 2:1–13, faith with no works in Jas 2:14–26, conflicts and disputes in Jas 4:1–3 and oppression in Jas 5:4–6. On the other hand, Jas 3:17–18 represents guiding values for the admonitions of the Epistle: be doers of the word, care for orphans and widows, do not show partiality, bridle your tongue, live according to the love command, humble yourselves before God, and so on.

The issue of wisdom is found explicitly in Jas 1:5, 16–18 and 3:13–18, however the wisdom tradition in the Epistle of James is significant for all other main topics of the letter. In Jas 1:5 wisdom and prayer are connected.⁴⁸ Jas 1:5 says that one should pray for wisdom, and of course the answer to prayer is from above. This connects Jas 1:5 with the last verses of the Epistle, namely Jas 5:13–20 which is an elaboration on prayer.⁴⁹ Thus one might say that there is an *inclusio* between chapters one and five.

The Desire Gives Birth to Death / God Gives Us Birth by the Word of Truth—ἀποκυέω

¹⁵ then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth (ἀποκυέω) to death.

¹⁸ In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth (ἀποκυέω) by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

(Jas 1:15, 18)

In the Epistle of James, the verb ἀποκυέω, to give birth, is only found in Jas 1:15 and 18. In verse 15 desire is the subject and the result is death, whereas in verse 18 God is the subject, and the result of being given birth by the word of truth is to be first fruits of God's creatures. The two represent utter contrasts. These two verses of chapter one are linked to 4:4–10 and 5:19–20. The desire of 1:15 corresponds to the friendship with the world in 4:4. The consequence of the desire is death and of the friendship with the world, enmity with God. On the other hand if you have been given birth by the word of God you act as in Jas 5:19–20 and save someone from death.

Double-Minded Person—ἀνὴρ διψυχος

⁶ But ask in faith, never doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind; ^{7, 8} for the doubter, being double-minded (ἀνὴρ διψυχος) and unstable in every way, must not expect to receive anything from the Lord.⁵⁰

(Jas 1:6–8)

⁴⁸ Αἰτέω, to ask, which is used in Jas 1:5, with God as an object has the same meaning as προσεύχομαι, to pray.

⁴⁹ Προσεύχομαι is used in Jas 5:13ff.

⁵⁰ Due to English syntax, verses 7 and 8 have been merged compared with the Greek text of NA²⁷.

The contrast between faith and doubt and the doubter being double-minded is somehow also linked to the textual unit 2:1–13. The problem there is, as I shall show in the exegesis of these verses, that the assembly acts contrary to their faith. Their actions are witnesses of double-mindedness. Further the issue is repeated in Jas 4:7–12 where the medicine against double-mindedness is to draw near to God. This issue is also linked to the issue of faith and works in Jas 2:14–26. If a person has faith, but his or her deeds are not compatible with his or her faith, his or her actions show his or her double mind.

The issue of double-mindedness is explicitly found in Jas 1:6–8 and 4:7–12, however a person who does not follow the values of Jas 3:17–18 is double-minded, and thus the issue is also linked to partiality in Jas 2:1–13, to not being doers of the word, and so on.

Humble, Poor and Wealthy—ὁ ταπεινός, ὁ πτωχός and ὁ πλούσιος

⁹ Let the believer who is lowly (ὁ ταπεινός) boast in being raised up, ¹⁰ and the rich (ὁ πλούσιος) in being brought low, because the rich will disappear like a flower in the field. ¹¹ For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the field; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. It is the same way with the rich; in the midst of a busy life, they will wither away.

(Jas 1:9–11)

The topic of humble/poor and rich is repeated in 1:27b where the orphans and widows are mentioned. In James 1 it seems that everything is turned upside down: the lowly shall be raised up and the rich be brought low because their wealth will disappear. In an eschatological perspective wealth is of no value. At the same time, the humble, i.e. orphans and widows, are to be cared for. The next encounter comes in 2:1–13, specifically vv. 5–7, and 2:14–17. Again everything is turned upside down. The poor (ὁ πτωχός) shall be rich in faith and the wealthy are the oppressors (vv. 5–7). At the same time one shall care for the poor (vv. 14–17) and this is understood to be deeds that follow faith. Further in 4:6 it is stated that God gives grace to the humble—ὁ ταπεινός. James 4 continues by underlining that wealth will perish and therefore other values must be more important, see 4:13–17. Jas 5:1–6 concludes the topic of humble/poor and rich with woes over the wealthy.

Bridle the Tongue—χαλιναγωγέω γλῶσσαν

¹⁹ You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰ for your anger does not produce God's righteousness.

²⁶ If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues (χαλινῶν γλῶσσαν) but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless.

(Jas 1:19–20, 26)

This topic in James 1 is repeated in a lengthy unit in Jas 3:1–12, and the issue is also touched upon in Jas 4:11. Basically this topic has to do with acting according to the Christian faith. If you are a believer, you have to be aware that what you say can be very destructive. Your faith shows itself through how you speak. In this sense both to speak and to act stand in the same relation to the faith according to the Epistle of James. If you have faith, you must speak and act accordingly.

Doers of the Word—ποιηταὶ λόγου

²¹ Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls. ²² But be doers of the word (ποιηταὶ λόγου), and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. ²³ For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; ²⁴ for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. ²⁵ But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

²⁷ Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

(Jas 1:21–25, 27)

The issue of being doers of the word is central to many of the other topics we have touched upon. For James faith and works are two sides of the same coin. The issue is repeated in Jas 2:1–4, 8–13, 14–26. In 2:1–4 favoritism is an action that opposes faith. In 2:8–13 partiality is again condemned as sin, and the correct action of a believer is to fulfil the royal Law according to the Scriptures. The topic is further developed in Jas 2:14–26 and the conclusion is that faith without works is dead. If you believe in the word you have to be a doer of the word. The practical action highlighted in this textual unit is to supply a brother or sister who is naked and lacks food, with clothes and food. This is a direct parallel to caring for orphans and widows in 1:27. Jas 3:17–18 is again relevant because these verses lay the value foundation for the deeds of faith. The conflicts and disputes of Jas 4:1–6 is an example of what can happen if one is not a doer of the word. Jas 4:11 is also relevant as it says that the one who speaks evil against the Law judges the Law, and if you judge the Law you are not a doer of the Law.

The Relation Between James 1, James 2:1–13 and the Rest of the Epistle

The key verses of the Epistle of James are 3:17–18. They present the values on which one should base one's life. The whole Epistle seems to be ethical teaching at some level, and 3:17–18 represent the ethical norm for this teaching. By these values the addressees are condemned and based on these values the admonitions are given. Integrity seems to be a key word for the Christian life that the author of James promotes. A central message of the Epistle is that a person who is a believer has to live accordingly. A person who hears the word has to be a doer of the word. Faith and works cannot and shall not be divided. Hence, the central issues of the Epistle are all linked together through the wisdom from above and through the link between faith and works: the one who endures trials, testing of faith and temptation shows that he or she has integrity of faith and that he or she lives according to the wisdom from above. The person who is double-minded shows that his or her faith lacks integrity and that he or she does not live according to the wisdom from above. The way the Christians treat the humble and poor shows whether they have a faith of integrity and whether they live according to the wisdom from above. Likewise the relation between rich and poor is a witness of the same issue. A person who lives according to the wisdom from above does not show partiality. A doer of the word also bridles his or her tongue.

If we take a look at Jas 2:1–13 in relation to the rest of the Epistle, we can observe the following: first, the oppression mentioned in Jas 2:6b–7 is a practical example of trials, testing and temptation. Second, there is a clear link between Jas 2:1–13 and the wisdom tradition: the wisdom from above shows no partiality. The admonition in Jas 2:1 is to show no partiality. It is an admonition that tells the recipients to live according to the wisdom tradition. Third, if you are double-minded you do not live according to the values presented in 3:17–18 and that is the very problem of Jas 2:1–13. The assembly does not act in accordance with the values in Jas 3:17–18. Fourth, Jas 2:1–13 is linked to the other texts in the Epistle concerning rich and poor, starting with Jas 1:9–11, continuing with Jas 2:14–17 and Jas 5:1–6. From these textual units it is obvious that the author of the Epistle is on the side of the poor. Last, Jas 2:1–13 shows that the assembled people are not doers of the word, and thus the textual unit of 2:1–13 is also linked to 1:22–25.

Structure

Having reflected upon the relation between James 1 and the rest of the Epistle, it is now time to consider the structure of the Epistle. I shall

follow Ernst Baasland who has reflected upon this at length in an article in *ANRW*.⁵¹ He understands the Epistle to be written in the context of Greek Hellenistic rhetoric and agrees with W. Wuellner that the Epistle can be seen as a speech fulfilling Aristotle's demands to a speech: *exordium*, *narratio*, *propositio*, *argumentatio*, *peroratio*. Baasland's structuring of the Epistle follows this pattern:

1:2–15	<i>exordium</i>
1:16–18	<i>transitus</i>
1:19–27	<i>propositio</i>
2:1–5:6	<i>argumentatio</i>
2:1–3:10a	<i>confirmatio</i>
3:10b–12	<i>transitus</i>
3:13–5:6	<i>confutatio</i>
5:7–20	<i>peroratio</i>

In addition to a structuring of the Epistle following Aristotle's demands to a speech, Baasland has also structured the Epistle of James according to thematic textual units. These two structures more or less follow each other. He has done this both in an article in *Studia Theologica* and in his James commentary.⁵² Here Baasland observes that there is a strong link between the opening and the ending of the Epistle, as well as between James 1 and the rest of the Epistle:

1:1–18	1:19–27		3:13–4:6		5:7–20
		2:1–13; 2:14–26; 3:1–12		4:7–10; 4:11–5:6	

If we compare these two ways of structuring the Epistle, we observe that the *argumentatio* is divided into six textual units. The *confirmatio* and *transitus* are divided into three textual units and the *confutatio* is likewise divided into three textual units.⁵³ In the above sections I have shown that

⁵¹ Ernst Baasland, "Literarische Form, Thematik und geschichtliche Einordnung des Jakobusbriefes," in *ANRW: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neuen Forschung II: Principat*, ed. Wolfgang Haase and Hildegard Temporini (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), 3654–3659.

⁵² See Ernst Baasland, "Der Jakobusbrief als neutestamentliche Weisheitsschrift," *ST* 36 (1982), 122; Ernst Baasland, *Jakobsbrevet*, Kommentar till Nya Testamentet, vol. 16 (Uppsala: EFS-förlaget, 1992).

⁵³ I shall reflect upon the more detailed structure of Jas 2:1–13 in the section below named 'Jas 2:1–13 in its Jamesian context'. It is helpful to an overall understanding of the

thematically the *exordium*, *transitus* and *propositio* are linked in several ways to the *argumentatio* and *peroratio*. This is basically the same as what Baasland has shown in his thematic structure of the Epistle of James. The textual unit that I shall interpret in this book is the first textual unit of the *confirmatio* of the Epistle and the first main thematic textual unit.

Genre

Several genres have been suggested for the Epistle of James and Popkes has given a thorough résumé of the different positions concerning the genre of the Epistle of James.⁵⁴ Dibelius' view was that the Epistle was paraenesis.⁵⁵ Dibelius' view has been challenged on this point, both regarding how he defined paraenesis,⁵⁶ and also whether this is a relevant label for the Epistle. Other alternatives have included speech of admonition (protreptic discourse),⁵⁷ catechesis,⁵⁸ and general teaching and preaching.⁵⁹ Sophie Laws more generally calls the Epistle an ethical document.⁶⁰

The Epistle seems to cut across several genres and could thus have been used in different ways:

Epistle of James and as I shall show in the exegesis of Jas 2:1, the address ἀδελφός/ἀδελφοί is used in almost all of the textual units that Baasland has identified.

⁵⁴ Popkes, *Adressaten, Situation und Form des Jakobusbriefes*, 10–18.

⁵⁵ Dibelius' understanding of paraenesis was as follows: "Unter Paränese verstehen wir dabei einen Text, der Mahnungen allgemein sittlichen Inhalts aneinanderreihet. Gewöhnlich richten sich die Sprüche an eine bestimmte (wenn auch vielleicht fingierte) Adresse oder haben mindestens die Form des Befehls oder Aufrufs; das unterscheidet sie von dem Gnomologium, der blossen Sentenzen-Sammlung." See Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 16f. It is also a premise of Dibelius' definition of paraenesis that the Epistle is incoherent and that the admonitions do not stand in relation to a specific situation, see Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 14f.

⁵⁶ See Wiard Popkes, "James and Paraenesis, Reconsidered," in *Texts and Contexts, Biblical Texts in Their Textual and Situational Contexts: Essays in Honour of Lars Hartman*, ed. David Hellholm Tord Fornberg (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1995).

⁵⁷ See e.g. Baasland, "Literarische Form, Thematik und geschichtliche Einordnung des Jakobusbriefes," 3652–3654; Johnson, *The Letter of James*, 24: "protreptic discourse in the form of a letter"; Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, 7: "The form of the Epistle of James is exceedingly simple. It consists of a series of admonitions on different themes which are dealt with one after another without any clearly discernible plan."

⁵⁸ For an overview of the catechetical character of the Epistle of James, see Popkes, *Adressaten, Situation und Form des Jakobusbriefes*, 12f.

⁵⁹ The preaching character of the Epistle is striking in Jas 2:5: Ἀκούσατε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί. Moo argues that "perhaps the closest we can get to anything specific is to think of James as a sermon or homily", see Moo, *The Letter of James*, 8.

⁶⁰ See Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 27: "The Epistle of James is the most consistently ethical document in the New Testament".

Von einer allgemein akzeptierten Gattungsbestimmung darf man also z.Z. nicht ausgehen; die Einzelbeobachtungen behalten dagegen ihren Wert, insbesondere: Anredecharakter, Unterweisung im weiteren Sinn, Lehr- und Weisheitselemente, Anfängereinweisung, Verbindungen zur Taufe.⁶¹

Taking into consideration that the Epistle had multiple addressees, I find it conceivable that it can also have been used differently in different assemblies. The Epistle has an admonishing character. It is clearly ethical teaching. This ethical teaching might have been used in teaching new converts, but also in the general teaching and preaching in the assemblies. Although the Epistle could have been used differently, both the investigation of the relation between James 1 and the rest of the Epistle as well as Baasland's suggested structures of the Epistle point towards the genre as protreptic wisdom speech in the form of a letter:

Der Jak ist eine für Vorlesungszwecke in Briefform geschriebene, protreptische, weisheitliche Rede. Die Rede ist durch diatribischen Unterricht (wohl in einem Lehrhaus) entstanden und wurde publiziert, um in den (gottesdienstlichen) Versammlungen der Gemeinde verlesen zu werden. Als Rede an eine Gemeinde, die eine hellenistische Bildung besitzt, ist das Werk auch nach rhetorischem Muster geformt.⁶²

Theological Background

There are especially two aspects of the Epistle's theological background that I shall focus on here: a) Jewish wisdom tradition, and b) the teaching of Jesus.

As I have shown in the section above on 'inner texture', wisdom is central to the Epistle of James. An important theological background is the Jewish wisdom tradition:

Without doubt this writing belongs to the general category of Wisdom literature so widespread throughout Israel and the Near East in the two centuries leading up to the first millennium and beyond. Wisdom literature

⁶¹ Popkes, *Adressaten, Situation und Form des Jakobusbriefes*, 18.

⁶² Baasland, "Literarische Form, Thematik und geschichtliche Einordnung des Jakobusbriefes," 3654. As Baasland also says, this genre of the Epistle presupposes at least some knowledge of Hellenistic rhetoric both by the author and the recipients of the Epistle. Given that the addressees were living in a heterogeneous culture of the Roman Empire one can also assume that they would know Hellenistic rhetoric. The question is whether it is likely that the author of the Epistle, being a Jewish Christian living in Jerusalem, knew Hellenistic rhetoric. As mentioned above, Hengel has argued thoroughly that Greek education and literature were widely known in Judea, see Hengel, *The 'Hellenization' of Judaea in the First Century after Christ*, 19–29.

communicates advice and instructions by one in authority (king, teacher, parent) based upon his or her experience of how to lead life successfully and live according to wisdom. In the Israelite Wisdom tradition further reflection also took place on the nature of wisdom itself. Both these aspects of the Wisdom tradition are found in the letter of James.⁶³

Baasland calls the Epistle of James a New Testament wisdom treatise.⁶⁴ He shows several parallels to wisdom literature: a) the author of the Epistle of James obviously knows Proverbs. In Jas 4:6 Prov 3:34 is cited, and there is also a parallel between Jas 5:20 and Prov 10:12. b) Further, there is an explicit use of the terms σοφία (1:5; 3:13, 17) and σοφός (3:13). c) There are several literary parallels between the Epistle of James and wisdom literature. Although it may be a point of debate as to what constitutes a literary parallel, Baasland finds parallels to wisdom literature in 40 of the 108 verses in the Epistle. d) The language and style of the Epistle is also typical of wisdom literature and several of the hapax legomena in the Epistle are wisdom terms with parallels in the wisdom literature. e) James is also the only text in the New Testament that uses Job. All these are important indicators that the Epistle of James is a New Testament wisdom treatise. However, according to Baasland, the most important indicator is that f) issues central to James are also central to the wisdom tradition: taking care of widows and orphans, esteeming persons, use and misuse of the tongue and perfection. According to Baasland there are also ideas that are held in common by the Epistle of James and wisdom literature: first, people either live in a good or a bad context. Second, all through the Epistle of James it is obvious that an action has a consequence. This is parallel to the wisdom tradition. Third, a person can never be judged in isolation. He or she is always part of a social context.⁶⁵

In addition to these observations by Baasland, Hartin has also observed that in Jewish wisdom literature comparison is often used. This is also often the case in the Epistle of James, see e.g. Jas 1:6 (the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea), 1:10b–11 (the rich will disappear like a flower in the field) and 4:14 (you are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes).⁶⁶ Both beatitudes and woes are characteristic features of wisdom literature that can also be found in the Epistle of James. Hartin

⁶³ Hartin, *James*, 10.

⁶⁴ Baasland, "Der Jakobusbrief als neutestamentliche Weisheitsschrift." The entire article is an argument for this view, however it is more specifically elaborated on pp. 123–125.

⁶⁵ For more elaboration on all these points, see *Ibid.*, 123f.

⁶⁶ Hartin, *James*, 77f.

finds beatitudes in Jas 1:12 and 1:25, and he finds woes in Jas 4:13–17 and 5:1–6.⁶⁷ Further, models or examples from Israel's history are a feature of wisdom literature also found in the Epistle of James (Jas 2:21–25; 5:10–11 and 5:17).⁶⁸ Lastly, in addition to the central wisdom issues that Baasland has observed, Hartin focuses on the testing of one's faith, which is a central issue within wisdom literature that can also be found in the Epistle of James.⁶⁹ Most importantly, however, wisdom in the Epistle of James as well as in the Jewish wisdom tradition is a gift from God (Jas 1:17; 3:17).⁷⁰

The second significant theological tradition in the Epistle of James is the teaching of Jesus. Although there are no direct quotations from Jesus, the Epistle shows a striking closeness to the Jesus tradition that is not found elsewhere in the New Testament.⁷¹ In all parts of the Epistle there are correspondences to the synoptic tradition and very often to the Sermon on the Mount/Plain (Matthew 5–7 and Luke 6:20–49). Different scholars have slightly different views on the correspondences; however, I shall present Hartin's chart of correspondences:⁷²

James	Matthew	Luke	Topic
1:2	5:11–12	6:22–23	Joy under persecution
1:4	5:48		Call to perfection
1:5	7:7	11:9	
1:17	7:11	11:13	Asking
4:2–3	7:7–8	11:9–10	
1:6	21:21		Faith and doubting
1:22	7:24	6:46–47	Doers of the word
1:23	7:26	6:49	
2:5	5:3,5 (11:5)	6:20 (7:22)	Poor
2:8	22:39–40	10:27	Law of love

⁶⁷ Ibid., 78.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 79.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ See Patrick J. Hartin, *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus*, JSNTSup, vol. 47 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 140. According to Baasland, there are no other treatises in the New Testament with so many references to the synoptic tradition as the Epistle of James, see Baasland, "Der Jakobusbrief als neutestamentliche Weisheitsschrift," 125.

⁷² The complete chart can be seen in Hartin, *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus*, 141f. I shall only include the correspondences between James, Matthew and Luke, and the topic. Hartin on the other hand also comments on source and location in Q. This is not my focus, hence I shall omit it.

Table (*cont.*)

James	Matthew	Luke	Topic
2:10	5:18–19	16:17	Obligation to keep the whole Law
2:11	5:21–30		Do not kill or commit adultery
2:13	5:7	6:36	Mercy
2:15–16	25:34–35	3:11	Clothe the naked
3:12	7:16–18	6:43–44	Fruit of good works
3:18	5:9		Peace-makers
4:4	12:39	11:29	Unfaithful creatures serving two
	6:24	16:13	masters
4:8	5:8		Pure in heart
4:9	(5:4)	6:25 (6:21b)	Mourn and weep
4:10	23:12	14:11 18:14	Humility and exaltation
4:11	7:1–12	6:37–38	Do not judge
5:1		6:24–25	Weep
5:2–3	6:19–21	12:33–34	Treasure in heaven
5:6	(7:1)	6:37	Do not condemn
5:9	24:33		Judge at door
5:10	5:11–12	6:23	Suffering prophets
5:12	5:34–37		Oaths
5:17		4:25	Elijah as example
5:19–20	18:15	17:3	Relation to sinful brother

From this chart we can observe that in five of the verses that shall be interpreted in this book, there are correspondences to the Jesus tradition. I shall elaborate on this in the exegesis of Jas 2:1–13. We can also observe that several of the correspondences are with the beatitudes: Jas 2:5 (the poor), 4:9 (those who mourn and weep), 2:13 (those who are merciful), 3:18 (those who make peace), 4:8 (those who are pure in heart), 1:2 and 5:10 (those who are reviled).⁷³ From this observation we can conclude that there is a strong link between the Jesus tradition in James and the wisdom tradition in James.⁷⁴ The close relation between the Epistle of James

⁷³ For a thorough investigation of these correspondences, see *Ibid.*, 148–164.

⁷⁴ Patrick J. Hartin even concludes that due to the strong link between wisdom tradition and Jesus tradition in the Epistle of James, wisdom “has taken on a decidedly Christian perspective”, see Hartin, *James*, 241. Hartin also concludes that due to the strong links to the Jesus tradition, we can no longer place the Epistle of James in the periphery of the New Testament, see p. 240. It seems that Hartin here argues that James has a high Christology equal to the Johannine prologue and the Christophanies in the Pauline Epistles.

and the Jesus tradition shows that the theology of the Epistle was closely connected to the heart of the early Christian movement. Therefore the admonitions of the Epistle and the theological teaching were of course important for the first readers/hearers of the Epistle. They recognised that this was central Christian teaching and therefore one has to conclude that whenever they were accused of wrong Christian behaviour, as they are in James 2, the accusations would be taken seriously.

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES IN A GRAECO-ROMAN CONTEXT

One of the consequences of the spread of the Roman Empire was acculturation to the Roman way of governing and way of life: “Natives had to adjust to a ‘colonial’ administrative structure that forced upon them taxes, governors and soldier-farmers who confiscated their land”.⁷⁵ Cities in the Empire had a Roman presence. This Roman presence was physical in the sense that representatives for the Emperor would be present in cities of some size. The presence was also ideological in the sense that there was a certain Roman cultural etiquette that the people of the city would follow independently of their citizenship. I shall come back to a more thorough analysis of life in a Roman city in chapter four. At this point, however, it is important to underline that life in the Empire for any group, Christian, Jewish or other, could in no way be indifferent to the Roman cultural etiquette, to the Roman way of governing, and so on. The Empire was omnipresent and so was its cultural influence. Interpretations of the New Testament can therefore always be carried out against a Graeco-Roman cultural background.

One of the premises for my investigation is that the Epistle of James can also be understood against a Graeco-Roman cultural background. As I have already shown, the structure of the Epistle is influenced by Graeco-Hellenistic rhetoric. And the people living in the dispersion, i.e. in other parts of the Roman Empire, would be influenced by the Graeco-Roman culture. Hence, it is relevant to investigate how this influenced Christian life, and more specifically for this study, how it influenced the lives of the addressees of the Epistle of James. This shall be one of the premises of my

⁷⁵ Dennis C. Duling, “Empire: Theories, Methods, Models” in *The Gospel of Matthew in its Roman Imperial Context*, ed. John Riches and David C. Sim, Early Christianity in Context (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 69. Duling understands the acculturation as a primary factor leading to resistance in the East.

interpretation and a focus in my interpretation. I shall not focus much on the Jewish character of the Epistle, as that has already been done thoroughly by many scholars. As far as I have been able to find out, a Graeco-Roman focus specifically on Jas 2:1–13 has not been investigated earlier.⁷⁶ Therefore there is a need to carry out such an investigation.

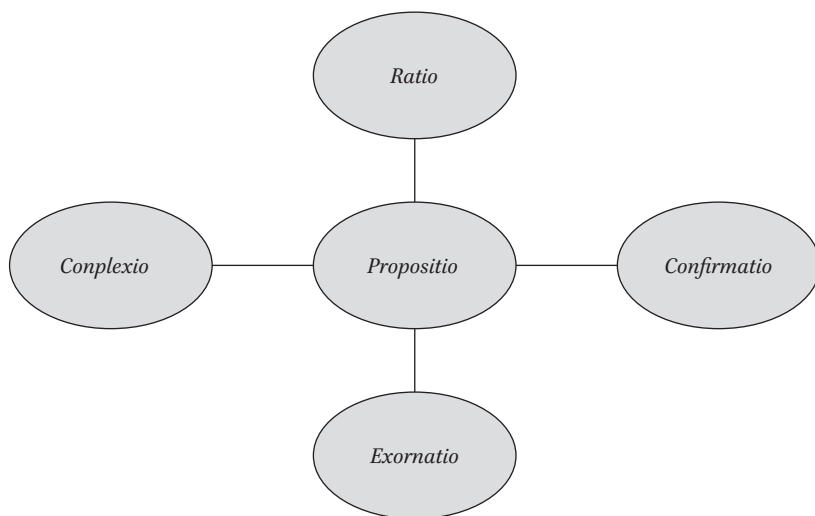
I have above shown agreement with those scholars who have dated the Epistle of James to the late first century, more specifically the 90s C.E. This dating puts the Epistle of James at a time when the Christian assemblies were increasingly seen as separate from the Jewish assemblies. This would probably mean that even though the assemblies addressed in the Epistle of James most likely had both ethnic Jews and Gentiles as members, the assemblies did not have the same privileges in the Empire as the Jewish assemblies had. The dating also places the Epistle in the time of the emperor Domitian, who was known for his paranoia and for his many persecutions. He persecuted both Christians and others. If we read through the whole Epistle of James, we see that the issue of trials, temptation, oppression and persecution is found in Jas 1:2–4, 12–15; 2:6b–7 and 5:7–11. The addressees must have been familiar with this issue. They had heard about persecutions and they may even have experienced persecution. That this issue is reflected in the Epistle is an indication of an imperial presence in the text of the Epistle. The strongest indication of an imperial presence in the Epistle of James, however, is found in Jas 2:2–4. The man wearing a gold ring is most likely an equestrian running for political office. I shall argue this point thoroughly in chapters four and five. The point now is that a specific imperial presence in the textual unit that I shall interpret makes an interpretation that takes the Graeco-Roman background of the text seriously even more relevant.

JAMES 2:1–13 IN ITS JAMESIAN CONTEXT

Having investigated questions concerning the whole Epistle of James, such as author, addressees, inner texture, genre, theological background and the Epistle's relation to the Graeco-Roman culture, I shall proceed to investigate the relation between the textual unit Jas 2:1–13, and the Epistle of James as a whole.

⁷⁶ However, Matt A. Jackson-McCabe has done something similar concerning the Law in James, see Matt A. Jackson-McCabe, *Logos and Law in the Letter of James: The Law of Nature, the Law of Moses, and the Law of Freedom*, NovTSup, vol. C (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

In the wider Jamesian context the textual unit of Jas 2:1–13 is the first part of the *confirmatio* (Jas 2:1–3:10a) which is the beginning of the *argumentatio* (Jas 2:1–5:6). Let me elaborate on the structure of Jas 2:1–13 and link this to the wider structure of the epistle. Duane F. Watson has, in an article in *NTS* from 1993, argued “that James 2 is constructed according to a standard elaboration pattern for argumentation discussed by the Graeco-Roman rhetoricians”.⁷⁷ I shall use his findings when mapping the structure of Jas 2:1–13.⁷⁸ Watson uses Cicero’s *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (*Her.*) as a starting point when mapping the inner texture of James 2. According to *Her.* 2.18.28 and 2.29.46,⁷⁹ the complete argumentation should consist of five main parts: 1. *Propositio*, 2. *Ratio*, 3. *Confirmatio*, 4. *Exornatio* (including a. *Simile*, b. *Exemplum*, c. *Amplificatio*, d. *Iudicatio*), and 5. *Complexio*.⁸⁰ These can be figuratively presented as follows:



⁷⁷ Duane F. Watson, “James 2 in Light of Greco-Roman Schemes of Argumentation,” *NTS* 39 (1993), 94.

⁷⁸ Both Hartin and Wachob have used the same structure as Watson proposes, see Hartin, *James*, 125–128, and Wachob, *The voice of Jesus in the social rhetoric of James*, 59–113.

⁷⁹ See Cicero, *Cicero in Twenty Eight Volumes: Rhetorica ad Herennium*, trans. Harry Caplan, LCL, vol. I (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989).

⁸⁰ There is a most helpful figure of different patterns of rhetoric in Watson, “James 2 in Light of Greco-Roman Schemes of Argumentation,” 97.

Watson finds all these five main parts in Jas 2:1–13. I shall now present them and link them to the rest of the epistle.

Propositio

In Jas 2:1–13, v. 1 represents the *propositio*. A *propositio* is understood as the proposition the author intends to prove. It is the starting point of an argumentation. V. 1, the *propositio* of this particular argumentation, goes: “My brothers and sisters, you cannot have faith in our Lord, the glorious Jesus Christ, and show partiality.”⁸¹

The *propositio* of Jas 2:1–13 is the main message of the textual unit, and since it is the beginning of the *argumentatio* of the Epistle it sets the standard for the whole *argumentatio* of the Epistle. The standard is that you shall not show partiality. I have already shown that wisdom is significant in the Epistle and that wisdom from God shows no partiality (Jas 3:17–18). Wisdom from God and partiality are opposites. Hence, the *propositio* of Jas 2:1–13 establishes a link between this textual unit and the wisdom tradition of the Epistle, which is found in the *exordium* (1:2–15, specifically 1:5), *transitus* (1:16–18) and *confutatio* (3:13–18). One of the important values of the wisdom tradition introduces the whole *argumentatio* of the Epistle, hence the values of the wisdom tradition are important for all of the *argumentatio*. The *argumentatio* of the Epistle starts with an admonition that says that a believer should follow the wisdom from above instead of breaking with the values of the wisdom from above.

Ratio

² For if a man with a gold ring and in bright clothing,⁸² and also a beggar in filthy clothing should happen to enter your assembly, ³ and you look at the one who is wearing the bright clothes with favour and tell him, “You may sit here, on an honourable seat”, whereas you tell the beggar, “You may stand there, or sit under my footstool”, ⁴ have you not then wavered among yourselves and become evil-thinking judges?

⁸¹ The quotations of Jas 2:1–13 are my own translation which will be presented and argued in chapter five.

⁸² The technical term in Latin is *toga candida*.

Vv. 2–4 constitute the *ratio* of the textual unit. According to Watson “the *ratio* is a reason establishing the truth of the *propositio*, its causal basis”.⁸³ Watson further notices that the *ratio* starts with the conjunction γάρ, which indicates that it “provides a reason for the *propositio*”.⁸⁴ The *ratio* is in the form of an example (vv. 2–3) followed by a reproach in v 4. It is a proof of *exemplum*. This is according to Watson a standard feature of deliberative rhetoric.⁸⁵

The *ratio* of Jas 2:1–13 is thematically linked to part of the *exordium* because it is a practical example of double-mindedness (Jas 1:6–8), and to part of the *confutatio* (Jas 4:7–12) because in this part of the *confutatio* the medicine against double-mindedness is presented as drawing near to God. The *ratio* is also thematically linked to the *propositio* of the Epistle through the issue of being doers of the word (Jas 1:21–25, 27), and to other parts of the *confirmatio* of the Epistle of James, mainly Jas 2:14–26. It is also linked to parts of the *confutatio* (Jas 3:17–18) because it shows opposite values to the wisdom from above. The proof of *exemplum* in Jas 2:2–4 is a practical example of double-mindedness because it shows what happens if an assembly tries both to believe in Christ and to act according to the world: they have then wavered among each other and become evil-thinking judges. The right behaviour is presented in Jas 4:7–12, namely to draw near to God. This is also the main point of the *exornatio* (Jas 2:8–11).

Confirmatio

⁵ Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters! Has not God chosen the absolute poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? ⁶ But you have dishonoured the beggar. Is it not the rich who oppress you, and are they not the ones who pull you into the courts of justice? ⁷ Is it not they who revile the good name that has been invoked over you?

Vv. 5–7 constitute the *confirmatio* of Jas 2:1–13.⁸⁶ Watson cites Cicero for a definition of *confirmatio*: it “corroborates, by means of additional argu-

⁸³ Watson, “James 2 in Light of Greco-Roman Schemes of Argumentation,” 102. (Watson has the understanding of the *ratio* as the causal basis of the *propositio* from Cicero, *Her.* 2.18.28; 2.23.35–24.37; 4.43.56 and from Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata*, lines 42–4).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 104.

ments, the briefly presented reason”.⁸⁷ It is the additional argument to prove the *propositio*.

The additional arguments of the *confirmatio* of Jas 2:1–13 obviously relate to the Jesus tradition. I have commented on this in the section on ‘Theological Background’, and I shall elaborate on this in the exegesis of these verses. However, the *confirmatio* also relates to other parts of the Epistle of James. First of all it thematically relates to the *exordium*, the *propositio*, the *confirmatio* and the *confutatio* through the issue of poor and rich (Jas 1:9–11; 1:27b; 2:14–17; 4:6 and 5:1–6). Second, it relates to part of the *confutatio* through the issue of the addressees being oppressors (Jas 5:6). Third, it also thematically relates to part of the *propositio*, the *confirmatio* and the *confutatio* through the issue of being doers of the word (Jas 1:21–25, 27; 2:1–4, 8–13, 14–26 and 4:1–6, 11).

Exornatio

⁸ If however, you fulfil, according to the scripture, the royal Law, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself”, you do well. ⁹ But if on the other hand you show partiality, you commit a sin and thus will be condemned by the Law as transgressors. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole Law, but in one [point] fails, he has become liable of [it] all. ¹¹ For the one who said, “You shall not commit adultery”, he also said, “You shall not murder”. But if you do not commit adultery, but you murder, you have become a transgressor of the Law.

Vv. 8–11 constitute the *exornatio* of Jas 2:1–13. Watson, following *Her.* 2.18.28, 2.29.46 and 4.43.56, defines *exornatio* as follows: It “confirms the argument once it is established”.⁸⁸ He continues by saying:

In vv. 8–11 James uses a typical deliberative *topos* of what is lawful, dissuading his audience from partiality by demonstrating that it is unlawful within the community’s understanding and sacred writings.⁸⁹

First of all the *exornatio* of Jas 2:1–13 is thematically linked to part of the *confutatio* of the Epistle where the issue is to draw near to God (Jas 4:7–11). This is presented as the alternative action to double-mindedness. In Jas 2:1–13 the *exornatio* represents the opposite to what has been presented in the *ratio* and the *confirmatio*. In addition the *exornatio* is thematically linked to the *propositio* of the Epistle, other parts of the *confirmatio* and part of the *confutatio* through the issue of being doers of the word

⁸⁷ Ibid. The citation is from *Her.* 2.18.28.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 105.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

(Jas 1:21–25, 27; 2:14–26; 4:1–6). Jas 2:8–11 elaborates on obeying the royal Law and acting according to one's faith. In Jas 1:21–25 to be a doer of the word is linked to the 'perfect Law' and the 'Law of liberty'. I am convinced that these two and the 'royal Law' are expressions for the same Law, hence Jas 2:8–11 is also linked to the *propositio* of the whole Epistle through the Law. Part of the *exornatio* of Jas 2:1–13, namely 2:9, is also thematically linked to the *confutatio* through the issue of wisdom and wisdom not showing partiality (3:17–18).

Complexio

¹² Thus speak and so act as those who are about to be judged by the Law of liberty. ¹³ For the judgement is merciless towards him who did not show mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgement.

Finally, vv. 12–13 constitute the *complexio* of Jas 2:1–13. *Complexio* can be defined as "a brief conclusion which draws the argument together".⁹⁰ Further the *complexio* in Jas 2:1–13 is an *epicheireme*:

An epicheireme, unlike an enthymeme, has both premises stated. It has a major premise, a minor premise (which supports the major premise) and a conclusion containing the element of agreement between the major and minor premises. In vv. 12–13, the major premise is 'For judgement is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy' (which may have been a maxim), the minor premise is 'yet mercy triumphs over judgement', and the conclusion is 'So speak and act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty' (cf. 1:25). This connection between forgiveness at the last judgement and having shown mercy was traditional. The role of vv. 12–13 as a conclusion is underscored by the use of the emphatic construction οὕτως... οὕτως in v. 12 which brings the *topoi* of saying and doing together.⁹¹

The *complexio* of Jas 2:1–13 concludes the textual unit and is linked again thematically to the *propositio*, the *confirmatio*, and the *confutatio* through the issue of being doers of the word (Jas 1:21–25, 27; 2:14–26; 4:1–6). The conclusion is that in a situation of partiality you have to be a doer of the word, and if you are, you do not show partiality.

I have now shown that the textual unit of Jas 2:1–13 is closely linked to the wider structure of the Epistle of James. It is also the one textual unit in the Epistle of James that most clearly presents to us a picture of an

⁹⁰ Ibid., 107. Watson refers to *Her.* 2.18.28; 2.29.46; 4.43.56 as well as Hermogenes, *Pro-gymnasmata*, lines 60–3, for this definition of *complexio*.

⁹¹ Ibid.

assembly influenced by the Roman cultural etiquette. Therefore a focus on the Roman cultural aspects of Jas 2:1–13 is relevant for the exegesis of the textual unit.

SUMMARY

I have in chapter one shown an interpretative need concerning the Epistle of James: no one has carried out a postcolonial interpretation of Jas 2:1–13 although the material at hand is suitable, hence there is a research lacuna. Here in chapter two I have also shown that there is an interpretative need concerning the relation between the Epistle of James and Graeco-Roman culture. The Jewish cultural heritage of the Epistle of James has been thoroughly investigated by most researchers on the Epistle, but the imperial influence of culture and how that relates to an interpretation of the Epistle has not been in focus. In chapter two I have also found that the more probable dating of the Epistle is late first century C.E., and that the addressees are multiple, living in cities around the Empire. Since the addressees are multiple, the issues addressed in the Epistle are of universal application for first-century Christians. The topics are not specifically linked to one congregation, but are issues that most Christians would have to address at some level. I have also found that the two most significant theological backgrounds for the Epistle are the Jewish wisdom tradition and the synoptic Jesus tradition. I have underlined that the Epistle has an admonishing character, that it is ethical teaching and that the Epistle might have been used both for teaching and preaching in the assemblies and for teaching new converts. Against this background and against the background of reflections around structure, I concluded, with Baasland, that the genre of the Epistle of James is protreptic wisdom speech. I have also shown in chapter two that all parts of Jas 2:1–13 have strong links to the wider structure of the Epistle of James.

CHAPTER TWO

SITUATING THE PRESENT INVESTIGATION WITHIN RECENT JAMESIAN RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

My specific approach to the Epistle of James is an interpretation of Jas 2:1–13 using a postcolonial optic. It is proper therefore that this chapter is focused towards that aim. One of the main reasons for my choice of postcolonialism as a theoretical perspective for my interpretation of Jas 2:1–13 is that there is a research lacuna regarding postcolonial interpretations of the Epistle of James. I intend to show this in the pages to come. The textual unit 2:1–13 is normally interpreted as regarding the relationship between poor and rich. As such it is linked to the textual units of Jas 1:9–11, 4:13–17 and 5:1–6. In addition, 1:27 and 2:15–16 may also be relevant. Although I in my interpretation of Jas 2:1–13 argue that the main issue in Jas 2:1–13 is not the relationship between poor and rich, but rather the relationship between persons of opposite rank: an equestrian and a beggar, it is nevertheless still relevant to let the issue of poor and rich in the Epistle of James form the point of focus in this chapter.¹ As a consequence there are several issues that are important in the context of Jamesian research that either shall not be treated at all, or shall be treated only briefly due to a certain overlap with the issue of poor and rich.²

¹ The main bulk of interpretations of Jas 2:1–13 argue that the issue at hand is the relationship between poor and rich. For further arguments for my view, see chapter five, especially the interpretation of vv. 2–4, as well as the interpretation of v. 6.

² Issues that shall not be treated in this research history, however important, are James and eschatology, see e.g. Todd C. Penner, *The Epistle of James and Eschatology: Re-reading an Ancient Christian Letter*, JSNTSup, vol. 121 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), and James and wisdom, see e.g. Jackson-McCabe, *Logos and Law in the Letter of James: The Law of Nature, the Law of Moses, and the Law of Freedom*. The relation between Jesus and James shall only be treated to the extent that the issue is relevant to the issue of poor and rich, see e.g. Hartin, *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus*, and Wachob, *The voice of Jesus in the social rhetoric of James*. This latter issue will also be treated in the exegesis of Jas 2:1–13 in chapter five of this study. An issue that will be briefly treated due to its rather loose overlap with the issue of poor and rich, is the issue of Paul and James, see e.g. Hengel, “Der Jakobusbrief als antipaulinische Polemik” and Randall C. Webber, *Reader Response Analysis of the Epistle of James* (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1996). For more thorough research histories, see e.g. Wachob, *The voice of Jesus in the social rhetoric*

When it comes to the scholarly literature, my starting point is Dibelius' ground-breaking commentary from 1921.³ Since it was published it has been highly influential on Jamesian research and still is. Although there was significant research done before Dibelius, his commentary does represent a very important turning point within Jamesian research. Taking Dibelius' commentary as a starting point for situating this investigation within recent Jamesian research can of course be discussed. However, although it was published as early as 1921, due to its wide influence on all later research, it is still a reasonable point of departure even when situating the study within recent Jamesian research. Therefore I shall focus this chapter on post-Dibelian research and my main focus will be monographs specifically focusing on issues of poor and rich in the Epistle of James.

MARTIN DIBELIUS

Martin Dibelius' general view on the Epistle of James has had a prominent impact on Jamesian research. His main view was that the Epistle is not a real letter but a paraenetic text. According to Dibelius, paraenesis is characterised as containing general admonitions⁴ with no apparent coherence either between the single admonitions,⁵ or between them and particular historical situations. Dibelius actually on several occasions warns his readers against confusing the paraenetic examples of the Epistle of James with historically accurate statements (in German: 'historische Angabe').⁶ Regarding the situation presented in Jas 2:2–4, he is clearly of the opinion that the reproached favouritism there does not have any connection with an actual real-life situation in the first century:

of James, 25–58, or Edgar, *Has God not Chosen the Poor? The Social Setting of the Epistle of James*, 13–43.

³ Dibelius' commentary was published in the commentary series 'Kritisch-Exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament', and the first edition of Dibelius' commentary from 1921 was the 7th edition of a commentary on James in this series. Dibelius was also the third scholar to write a commentary on the Epistle of James in this series, the other two being I.E. Huther with an edition in 1857, 1863 and 1870, and W. Beyschlag whose commentary was published in 1882, 1888 and 1898. Dibelius' commentary was published in revised editions in 1956, 1957, 1959 and 1964. I am using the 11th edition of the series, the 1964 edition of Dibelius' commentary.

⁴ Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 16–17.

⁵ Ibid., 14, 20. On page 14 Dibelius writes: "[E]s fehlt in dem ganzen Schriftstück der gedankliche Zusammenhang, sowohl zwischen den Abhandlungen wie zwischen den Sprüchen und sonstigen kleinen Einheiten."

⁶ Ibid., 162, 168.

Dass aber ein so unsoziales Verhalten, wie das 2,2ff. geschilderte, in diesen Versammlungen an der Tagesordnung gewesen wäre, darf nach Jak 2,2ff. nicht behauptet werden; [...] Jak will einfach an einem Beispiel argumentieren und wählt dazu nicht einen geringen, sondern einen krassen Beweis von *προσωποληψία*, den er überdies 2,3 in ganz unrealistischen Worten ausmalt. Man darf also dies zu paränetischem Zweck erzählte Beispiel nicht als historische Quelle für die Zustände der Christengemeinden benutzen; nicht als ob wir irgendeine Ursache hätten, die Christen der Zeit zu entschuldigen, sondern weil eine solche Benutzung auf einer Interpretationsmethode beruht, die der literarischen Art des Jak nicht entspricht.⁷

Paraenesis is also characterised by Dibelius as eclecticism. He says, “Es handelt sich ja um Weitergabe ethischer Tradition, die wohl umgetönt und umgeformt werden kann, aber nicht von Grund auf neugestaltet zu werden braucht.”⁸ Dibelius’ definition of paraenesis has been debated later on. Popkes sums up this debate and the criticism which has been voiced against Dibelius in his highly illuminating article “James and Paraenesis, Reconsidered” from 1995.⁹

What has Dibelius’ categorisation of the literary genre of the Epistle of James meant for the research on James after 1921? The scholars that have followed him in his overall view of the Epistle, saying that it is paraenetic with no apparent coherence, are many.¹⁰ I believe that the alleged incoherence of the Epistle has been over-focused, and it is only relatively recently that scholars have started to focus on the elements that bind the Epistle together. Following a focus on the coherence of the Epistle we have seen monographs focusing on themes uniting the Epistle.¹¹

⁷ Ibid., 162.

⁸ Ibid., 19.

⁹ See Popkes, “James and Paraenesis, Reconsidered,” 535–561. One of Popkes’ main criticisms against Dibelius is that he adapts the form critical definition of paraenesis, saying that a paraenetic text is incoherent and in general lacking any relation to a specific situation. Against this, Popkes’ argument is that paraenesis first of all must be understood as a functional term. It is not a literary genre but rather moral exhortations that presuppose conversion.

¹⁰ Since Dibelius there have been discussions as to how one should define the literary genre paraenesis. Dibelius has had to take severe criticism regarding how he defines paraenesis. Wolfgang Schrage adapts Dibelius’ view without much discussion in Horst Balz and Wolfgang Schrage, *Die “Katholischen” Briefe: Die Briefe des Jakobus, Petrus, Johannes und Judas*, 11th ed., NTD, vol. 10 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 1973). He not only adapts the general paraenetic view, but also lists ‘problems’ such as lack of coherence and that the admonitions are not linked to a specific situation. See pp. 6–8. It seems to me that Schlatter follows Dibelius’ view on this point, see A. Schlatter, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1956), 85. Franz Mußner quite clearly adapts Dibelius’ paraenetic view in Mussner, *Der Jakobusbrief*, 23–26.

¹¹ Scholars who focus on the coherence rather than the incoherence are e.g. Baasland and Webber. See Baasland, “Literarische Form, Thematik und geschichtliche Einordnung

One of the other impacts that Dibelius had is the view that the Epistle only consists of general admonitions with no necessary link to a particular situation. This has led researchers to look upon the examples given in James as less significant when it comes to whether they are realistic or not. The examples are often seen as parables or rhetorical devices that only serve to underline a general moral point. They are not seen as examples that underline specific moral points linked to a specific life situation for the Christians. I believe this is partly the reason why e.g. Baasland says in his commentary on Jas 2:2–4 that “this is hardly a recollection of something that has actually happened”.¹²

Since my focus in this research history shall be on the issue of poor and rich in Jamesian research, I shall now have a look at Dibelius’ view on this issue. Dibelius devotes nine pages in his introduction to this issue. His principal point is that James is antagonistic towards the rich, but has a deep sympathy towards the poor.¹³ The poor are understood along the lines of the pious poor, where poverty has become more or less a religious term. Dibelius traces this tradition back to Isaiah and the Psalms and also shows how the background of the Jesus tradition supports this understanding of poverty.¹⁴ Further, against the background of Hermas, Dibelius argues that at the time of James, wealthy persons had joined the Christian communities, and the pious poor did not receive the proper respect.¹⁵ The texts about poor and rich in James, Jas 2:1–13 included, are understood in this context:

In diesem Zusammenhang wollen die Worte des Jak über Arm und Reich betrachtet werden. Sie zeigen unseren Verf. als energischen Vertreter des alten und wieder neu belebten Armenstolzes; sie verraten aber auch, dass in der Christenheit seiner Zeit und seiner Umwelt dieser Stolz einer weltförmeren Beurteilung des Reichtums zu weichen beginnt.¹⁶

des Jakobusbriefes”; Baasland, *Jakobsbrevet.*; Webber, *Reader Response Analysis of the Epistle of James*. Baasland’s focus here is a rhetorical approach to the Epistle, and he argues well for the Epistle of James as an example of an ancient rhetorical text. Webber, on the other hand, not only binds the Epistle as such together, but he also looks at common features between James and Paul.

¹² Baasland, *Jakobsbrevet*, 64: “Den är knappast ett reportage om något som faktisk har hänt.”

¹³ Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 58.

¹⁴ See *Ibid.*, 59ff.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

So, according to Dibelius, wealth is a problem because it works against piety. The poor are the pious.

POOR AND RICH IN JAMESIAN RESEARCH

Having briefly presented Martin Dibelius and his view on poor and rich in the Epistle of James I shall now focus specifically on the issue of poor and rich in Jamesian research.¹⁷ I shall do this by looking at monographs focusing solely on the issue and by looking at monographs that concentrate on other issues, but at the same time also touch upon the issue of poor and rich. I shall do this chronologically, starting with Elsa Tamez' contribution from 1985,¹⁸ followed by the contributions of Pedrido Maynard-Reid from 1987,¹⁹ Matthias Ahrens from 1995,²⁰ Wesley Hiram Wachob from 2000²¹ and David Hutchinson Edgar from 2001.²² Although Martin Hengel has not written a monograph about poor and rich in James, he has touched upon the question through his research on the relation between James and Paul, and due to his vast influence I shall also present his view on rich and poor. Against the background of what I have found on poor and rich in Jamesian research, I shall end this chapter with some reflections around interpretative needs concerning Jas 2:1–13.

Elsa Tamez

Elsa Tamez reads the Epistle of James through the optic of liberation, and her book on the Epistle of James can be understood as a critique of mainstream Western research on the Epistle. Her perspective is that of the poor and oppressed; mainstream research on the other hand, according to her, has been done from the perspective of the rich and thus has had a focus on the rich. One of the consequences of this is, according to Tamez, that Western research has relativised the contrast between poor and rich

¹⁷ In the last twenty years of Jamesian research there has been an increasing focus on issues concerning poverty and wealth.

¹⁸ Tamez, *The Scandalous Message of James: Faith Without Works Is Dead*. Elsa Tamez' study was first published in Spanish in 1985. It was translated into English first in 1990, and revised in 2002. I am using the revised edition from 2002.

¹⁹ Maynard-Reid, *Poverty and Wealth in James*.

²⁰ Matthias Ahrens, *Der Realitäten Widerschein oder Arm und Reich im Jakobusbrief: Eine sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Berlin: Alektor, 1995).

²¹ Wachob, *The voice of Jesus in the social rhetoric of James*.

²² Edgar, *Has God not Chosen the Poor? The Social Setting of the Epistle of James*.

in James. Tamez also believes that a reading of James from the perspective of the poor and oppressed is more in accord with the author of the Epistle, as she argues that his perspective is that of the poor and oppressed.²³

Due to her focus on the poor and oppressed, centre and margin, I would argue that Tamez' study could possibly be understood as a postcolonial study of the Epistle of James. Her initial study from 1985 was of course done before postcolonialism entered biblical research and thus it is not surprising that she herself does not label her work as a postcolonial study. In general one can say that there is a certain overlap between liberation studies and postcolonial studies and Tamez' contribution is very clearly a liberation study.²⁴ As such it is the closest I have come to a postcolonial reading of the Epistle of James. As I have already mentioned, her study was translated into English in 1990 and revised in 2002. If Tamez wanted to put the label 'postcolonial' on her study, this could have been done in 2002. However, since she did not do it then, neither shall I. Let me still present her contribution thoroughly.

Tamez calls the Epistle of James 'the intercepted letter', and she dedicates her first chapter to explaining what she means by that. She argues that there have been and still are different attempts at interception of the letter. The late acceptance of the Epistle to the canon she takes to be one such interception.²⁵ She also argues that Western universities and churches have marginalised the Epistle of James, due to its focus on the practice of Christian life rather than on theoretical theology.²⁶ Tamez further holds that the fundamental critique of the rich that the Epistle puts forward has been too difficult for wealthy readers of the Epistle, and hence it has been intercepted.²⁷

Tamez' alternative to an interceptive reading of the Epistle of James is what she outlines in her commentary. Her approach is a Latin American reading from the perspective of the poor and oppressed. Through this she has found three distinct perspectives that pervade the whole Epistle. These are 'The Angle of Oppression-Suffering', 'The Angle of Hope' and

²³ Tamez, *The Scandalous Message of James: Faith Without Works Is Dead*, 21. Unlike Dibelius, Tamez understands the poor in the Epistle of James as materially poor, not as pious poor.

²⁴ Some well-known liberation theologians have turned to postcolonial studies during the past years, and Gerald West is an example of this.

²⁵ Tamez, *The Scandalous Message of James: Faith Without Works Is Dead*, 2.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

'The Angle of Praxis'. Throughout the rest of her book, she interprets the Epistle of James through these three perspectives.

The signs of a situation of oppression that she sees in the text are the fact that the addressees are in the dispersion, that there are trials and testing, that the addressees should show patience in suffering, that there are widows and orphans, that the rich drag the poor before the tribunals, that there is lack of food and clothing, accumulation of wealth, the presence of unpaid workers, etc.²⁸ All this leads Tamez to conclude that oppression was one of the most significant motivations for the author in writing the letter.²⁹ She further concludes that there are two antagonistic groups presented to us in the letter, namely the poor and the rich, the oppressed and the oppressors.³⁰ She also argues that the addressees of the letter themselves are among the oppressed. Her argument is based on John H. Elliott's sociological exegesis of 1 Peter, and grounds itself on the author's use of the term dispersion—*διασπορά*—in the address to the letter.³¹ According to Tamez, Elliott argues that the term dispersion not only refers to Jews explicitly, but that it came to be a term referring to an alien social condition that the Christian communities found themselves in. The term indicates that the Christians suffered political, legal, social and religious restrictions. That would mean that the addressees of the Epistle of James were marginalised and under severe restrictions.³²

At the same time Tamez sees hope in the letter. The greeting, *χαίρειν*, is the first sign of hope, which shows the good wishes the author has for the communities.³³ The joy that arises from praxis is the second (1:2–4; 1:25; 5:10–11).³⁴ The anticipated eschatological joy is the third sign of hope (1:9–11; 1:12).³⁵ The fourth is that God identifies himself with the poor.³⁶ The last sign of hope that Tamez identifies is the judgement. It represents hope for the poor because it is the end of oppression and suffering.³⁷

²⁸ Ibid., 13f.

²⁹ Ibid., 12.

³⁰ Ibid., 14.

³¹ John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981).

³² Tamez, *The Scandalous Message of James: Faith Without Works Is Dead*, 18f. Tamez refers to Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy*, 21–58. See especially Elliot, p. 38.

³³ Tamez, *The Scandalous Message of James: Faith Without Works Is Dead*, 29.

³⁴ Ibid., 29f.

³⁵ Ibid., 31f.

³⁶ Ibid., 35f.

³⁷ Ibid., 39.

The angle of praxis is, according to Tamez, a necessary consequence of the angle of hope. Hope without praxis is simply meaningless:

Nonetheless, hope is not sufficient; there is also a need for *praxis*, deeds. [...] James calls the communities to praxis, to make themselves felt in their environment by their testimony. For James, it seems, Christians are recognized not by their *being* but by their *doing*; by their fruits they are known.³⁸

The angle of praxis consists of patience, which is “a difficult attribute in desperate situations of oppression”.³⁹ It also consists of integrity and genuine prayer. Integrity is the core of praxis, and this integrity is how one can show no favouritism, not be envious, or jealous. It is also the opposite of duplicity, and God is the model of integrity.⁴⁰ Tamez concludes that James’ challenge is for the communities to show their faith through works. This is how a Christian community can demonstrate its integrity.⁴¹

Tamez’ interpretation of oppression, hope and praxis is a challenge to Western research not only because of her perspective from the situation of the poor, but also because of her interpretative results. Where Dibelius and others focus on literary genre, incoherent admonitions, and hence reduce the texts that talk about rich, poor and oppression, to e.g. literary exaggerations, Tamez stands independent of these debates and proposes a Latin American rereading of the Epistle. Through this rereading, she argues that the perspective of the poor and oppressed is not only a Latin American angle, but it is indeed the very perspective that the author of the Epistle of James takes. Where Hengel and others focus on the conflict between James and Paul regarding faith and works,⁴² Tamez again

³⁸ Ibid., 42 (italics by Tamez).

³⁹ Ibid., 43.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 46–51.

⁴¹ Ibid., 50.

⁴² A discussion that has drawn considerable attention within Jamesian research is whether there is an open theological conflict between the Epistle of James and the Pauline epistles. According to Baasland in his commentary on James this discussion has been going on since Augustine, see Baasland, *Jakobsbrevet*, 81–85. Within German Protestant research, the discussion has been prominent since Martin Luther. The main focus has been on the relationship between faith and works according to Paul and according to James. Most researchers have thought that Paul teaches salvation by faith alone, whereas James teaches salvation by faith and works together. These researchers have understood Jas 2:14–26 to present an understanding opposite to Paul’s and as being in conflict with Paul. Hengel is a prominent representative for this view. As with most German Protestant scholars, his starting point is that of the relationship between faith and works. His principal point is that the Epistle of James is a first-century anti-Pauline polemic, see Hengel, “Der Jakobusbrief als antipaulinische Polemik”. Against Hengel, Baasland argues that rather than a conflict it is a matter of differing perspectives between James and Paul, see Baasland,

stands independent of this debate. Instead of seeing an internal conflict between James and Paul, she sees a conflict between a Western prioritisation of reason and a Latin American prioritisation of praxis. Instead of seeing a conflict between faith and works, she sees hope as a necessary condition for praxis, and praxis as a necessary consequence of oppression and hope.

Shortly after Tamez first published her study on the Epistle of James, another study was published by Pedrito U. Maynard-Reid. It seems that his study gained respect relatively quickly as he is one of the scholars that is often referred to within Jamesian research on rich and poor. Let me present his study further.

Pedrito U. Maynard-Reid

Pedrito U. Maynard-Reid's *Poverty and Wealth in James* was published in 1987, only two years after Tamez' original publication. The monograph is written against the background of a sociological point of view. His focus is on the social milieu and ethos of the Epistle of James. He raises methodological questions regarding where to start a social reconstruction of early Christianity and he raises questions of historical distance between modern sociological theories and interpretation of New Testament documents and communities.⁴³ He does not interpret the whole Epistle, but rather four selected texts—the ones that most clearly talk about poverty and wealth.⁴⁴ His focus is on how poor and rich relate to each other in these texts. As a background to his sociological interpretation he first of all maps social stratification in the first century,⁴⁵ and second, he maps how Jewish and Christian literature talks about poor and rich.⁴⁶ In his interpretation of the four texts, he takes the opinion that the Epistle of James

Jakobsbrevet, 81–85 and 98–100. I believe that one of the premises for Hengel's position might be his view on authorship of the Epistle. He seems to take the opinion that the Epistle was most likely written by James, the brother of Jesus, or rather that it originated from the brother of Jesus but was written by a secretary, and spread amongst the mainly gentile congregations outside of Palestine around the time Paul was imprisoned, that is between 58 and 62 C.E., see Hengel, "Der Jakobusbrief als antipaulinische Polemik", 523. That designation of authorship would simply make the Epistle a witness to the already known conflict between James and Paul.

⁴³ Maynard-Reid, *Poverty and Wealth in James*, 2–3.

⁴⁴ The texts are Jas 1:9–11; 2:1–13; 4:13–17 and 5:1–6. In the same way as Tamez, and unlike Dibelius, Maynard-Reid understands the poor as materially poor, not as pious poor.

⁴⁵ Thus his concern is what Robbins called 'social and cultural texture', see Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 144–191.

⁴⁶ Maynard-Reid, *Poverty and Wealth in James*, 13–37.

is dealing with three different groups of wealthy persons, groups that the New Testament mentions, namely financiers (James 2), merchants (James 1 and 4) and agriculturalists (James 5).⁴⁷

As I already have mentioned, Maynard-Reid's textual study is mapped out as a sociological study from a historical perspective. Maynard-Reid also engages in a conversation with the classical Western Jamesian scholars. He concludes that the judgement over the rich and oppressive exploiters brings hope for the poor.⁴⁸ He also concludes that God is on the side of the poor. Further he states that according to James true religion is equated with social concern.⁴⁹ All through Maynard-Reid's conclusion, it is clear that he understands the challenge in the Epistle of James as a challenge both to the Christians of his day, and to contemporary Christians:

Throughout much of the scriptures, God's option for the poor is explicit. It is forcefully revealed when in James 5:1–6 God is shown to be attentive to the cry of the oppressed. That James takes up their cause as an apostle of Jesus Christ demonstrates his option for the poor. Like James, we, as modern representatives of Jesus Christ, are called to take that option and to take up the cause of the oppressed.⁵⁰

To my knowledge Maynard-Reid's study on poverty and wealth in James is one of the very first studies that focus solely on this issue. For this reason alone, he is an important figure within Jamesian research.

Matthias Ahrens

In 1995 another sociological analysis of the Epistle of James was published, this time in Germany. It was Matthias Ahrens' *Der Realitäten Wiederschein oder Arm und Reich im Jakobusbrief: Eine sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchung*. Ahrens has carried out a thorough sociological analysis of James, containing sociological analysis of language as well as literary genre. He also investigates the relationship between the issue of poverty and wealth in James in relation to the same issue among other authors contemporary to James, as well as in relation to the broader biblical traditions. His main focus is a 'sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchung der Realien' (socio-historical investigation of living conditions).⁵¹ In this investigation he looks at the

⁴⁷ Ibid., 69.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 97.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 98.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Maynard-Reid and Ahrens are both working with social and cultural texture.

texts in James that talk about poverty and wealth, and tries to find out whether these texts refer to a realistic situation.⁵²

His main conclusions are that poverty is not an idealised concept in James, but rather a scandal.⁵³ From a sociological perspective he argues that the Epistle of James criticises the societal structures of the Roman Empire, and he understands Jas 2:6, 4:13f and 5:1ff as examples of this critique.⁵⁴ Ahrens also argues that there is a deep scepticism in James towards the rich. For James it is obvious that he should take the side of the poor, and that the addressees of the Epistle should do the same. James bases this view on God's solidarity with the poor.⁵⁵ According to Ahrens' sociological interpretation of James, the relationship that the Christian community has to poor people and poverty is very much determined by religious norms. That means that poverty, according to Ahrens, very often would have been understood as 'Armenfrömmigkeit', i.e. piety of the poor. James on the other hand does not speak about poverty as some sort of pious movement; he is referring to a social reality, not a spiritual one.⁵⁶

Wesley Hiram Wachob

Wachob focuses on social aspects of poverty and wealth in the Epistle of James. He bases his study on classical rhetoric, and understands the Epistle of James as "written rhetorical discourse".⁵⁷ Wachob's view is that most scholars who have focused on the rhetorical aspects of the Epistle of James have left it with that. He says: "With few exceptions, however, analyses that have detected the influence of rhetoric have failed to address the social significance of rhetorical performance."⁵⁸ Against this background, his contribution to Jamesian research is to focus on the social significance of rhetoric. He understands the aim of the Epistle of James to be "to modify the social thought and behaviour of its addressees".⁵⁹ The aim of his study is through rhetorical analysis to "seek to ascertain the social texture of

⁵² Ahrens devotes one chapter to this investigation. See Ahrens, *Der Realitäten Wider-schein oder Arm und Reich im Jakobusbrief*, 97–139. I understand the other chapters in his book as background analysis for this main chapter.

⁵³ Ibid., 94.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 136.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 137.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 138.

⁵⁷ Wachob, *The voice of Jesus in the social rhetoric of James*, 1.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 12 note 31.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 1.

one particular allusion to a saying of Jesus in James 2.5”.⁶⁰ Wachob’s argument is that the Epistle of James is Graeco-Roman deliberative rhetoric,⁶¹ and as such it intends to evoke a social response among its addressees. This is, according to him, elemental to classical rhetoric.⁶² Rhetoric is in itself situational and thus reflects the social contexts from which it arises. That is why Wachob can say that “rhetorical discourse is inherently social discourse”.⁶³ At the same time, however, Wachob argues that a rhetorical study of an ancient text is something different from a historical study of the same text. Even though a rhetorical text reflects a social situation, a rhetorical study does not disclose the historical situation behind the text. Still a rhetorical text is not only ‘stylistic’, since its rhetorical situation reflects a social context.⁶⁴

[T]he Epistle of James is a deliberative discourse in the guise of a letter that uses sayings of Jesus to persuade an audience to think and act in ways that have significant social consequence. The test case for this hypothesis is James 2.5: a rhetorical performance of language that in other contexts is explicitly attributed to Jesus—a saying attributed to James that concerns the conflict between the rich and the poor, a social issue that is pivotal in the discourse of the epistle.⁶⁵

His conclusion is that Jas 2:5 “is a Jamesian performance of the saying of Jesus in Q^{Matt} 5.3”.⁶⁶ He further concludes that “the socio-rhetorical function of James 2.5 is that it recalls in the language of Jesus (very like the saying in Q^{Matt} 5.3) a precedent about God’s promise of the kingdom to the poor; and that that precedent in essence sets forth the identity, the way of life, and the goal of God’s pious poor”.⁶⁷ He also concludes that the rhetoric of James is sub-cultural to Jewish culture and counter-cultural to Graeco-Roman culture.⁶⁸ One example of this counter-cultural rhetoric is the demand in the Epistle to treat each other as equals. It is understood as a head-on confrontation with the honour/shame structure of Roman society.⁶⁹

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 12.

⁶² Ibid., 20.

⁶³ Ibid., 21.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 22.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 22f.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 199.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 200.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 195.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 198.

The effect of the socio-rhetoric of James is to establish boundaries for acceptable behaviour. The function of Jas 2:5 is to establish the identity of the community, and Wachob concludes that this identity is that of the pious poor.⁷⁰ He seems to take the position that within the Christian community there must have been some wealthy members, but the overall impression according to Wachob is that the community mainly consisted of materially poor people. It was expected, according to Wachob, that the wealthy would share some of their wealth with the more needy persons of the community. At the same time, Wachob is clearly concluding that the terms 'poor' and 'rich' were not only economic concepts. He talks about the 'elect poor' as a term that includes materially wealthy members of the community as well as the materially poor members. It thus becomes a designation of the Christians.⁷¹ On this point we see that Wachob differs from Tamez, Maynard-Reid and Ahrens. They all seem to be of the opinion that the poor are really materially poor, not just the pious poor or a general designation of the Christians. However, when we now take a look at David Hutchinson Edgar, we shall see that he also designates the poor as pious poor, i.e. using 'poor' more as a religious term than as a social term.

David Hutchinson Edgar

The study by David Hutchinson Edgar is from 2001.⁷² His understanding of James is based on the assumption that Jas 2:5–6 represents the central verses from which the whole Epistle must be interpreted. This understanding is reflected not only throughout his study, but also in the title itself: *Has God not chosen the Poor?* Even though Edgar's study is not a rhetorical one, his focus on the Jesus tradition in James is a clear parallel to Wachob's study. According to Edgar the main problem in James is that the honouring of the rich and the dishonouring of the poor has a symbolic meaning which the addressees are well aware of, namely of putting one's trust in a wealthy patron instead of God.

Edgar interprets the Epistle of James from the perspective of both social-science and linguistic studies.⁷³ His reading of James represents

⁷⁰ Ibid., 195.

⁷¹ Ibid., 196f.

⁷² Edgar's study was published in 2001 in the *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*; Supplement Series, as volume 206. The study is a revision of his doctoral thesis accepted by the University of Dublin in 1996.

⁷³ Edgar, *Has God not Chosen the Poor? The Social Setting of the Epistle of James*, 39.

both an explicit and implicit criticism of the tendency in scholarship since Dibelius to look upon the Epistle as a collection of paraenetic sayings with no inner connections. Through his methodological choices Edgar provides us with a reading that presupposes the unity of James' argument. Leaning heavily on Gerd Theissen, he identifies the poor in the Epistle to be radical wandering charismatic followers of Jesus. According to Theissen they were important teachers and prophetic figures within the Jesus movement.⁷⁴ This identification would mean that even though they were poor, they had a high social standing within the Christian community. The rich are, against the same background, identified by Edgar as potential patrons and benefactors for the Christian community, even though their wealth is due to exploitative and oppressive conduct. It is through these identifications that Edgar comes to the conclusion that the main problem in James is the symbolic meaning of honouring the rich and dishonouring the poor. By honouring the rich the Christians actually put their trust in wealthy patrons of the world instead of putting their trust in God. If, on the other hand, they had honoured the radical wandering charismatics, i.e. the poor, they would have indicated that they were putting their trust in God instead of in people.

Unlike Tamez, Maynard-Reid and Ahrens, who understand the poor as materially poor and the rich as materially rich, Edgar instead identifies the conflict between rich and poor as a spiritual-religious conflict.

Martin Hengel

Let me also have a look at Martin Hengel's contribution to this field within Jamesian research. I shall focus on two of his studies that contribute to this debate. The first is *Eigentum und Reichtum in der frühen Kirche* from 1973.⁷⁵ In this study the Epistle of James is treated in the context of apocalyptic Christianity in the chapter "Eigentumskritik im apokalyptischen Christentum und seiner Tradition." Hengel's main point concerning the Epistle of James is that Jas 2:1–7 and 5:1–6 shows that the people of Palestine were oppressed and that the Christian movement was critical towards social differences:

⁷⁴ See Ibid., 108. where he refers to Gerd Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity* (Philadelphia: 1978) and Gerd Theissen, *Social Reality and the Early Christians* (Edinburgh: 1992).

⁷⁵ Martin Hengel, *Eigentum und Reichtum in der frühen Kirche: Aspekte einer frühchristlichen Sozialgeschichte* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1973).

Diese Verse bringen in gleicher Weise die Unterdrückung wie die Empörung des einfachen Volkes im bäuerlichen Palästina zum Ausdruck. Hier zeigt sich, dass das Urchristentum u.a. auch eine sozialkritische Bewegung war—selbst wenn es nicht zur revolutionären Selbsthilfe griff, sondern die Unterdrücker dem Gericht Gottes überantwortete.⁷⁶

However, in the Jamesian scholarly discussions, Hengel is normally associated with debates concerning the relation between James and Paul, and his contribution has been of great importance. In the context of this wider debate, he has also touched upon the question of poor and rich in James and therefore the second study by Hengel that I shall present is “Der Jakobusbrief als antipaulinische Polemik.”⁷⁷

His main view is that the Epistle of James is anti-Pauline polemic. He fits the texts about poverty and wealth into this main view. According to Hengel, there seem to be at least two layers in James’ critique. One is that the Gentile-Christian communities in general are criticised due to their dependence on rich patrons and patronesses. Especially the communities in the big Roman cities such as Athens, Corinth, Ephesus and Rome, seem to have made themselves dependent on distinguished citizens. The man with the gold ring on his finger in Jas 2:2 represents these distinguished citizens, as do the rich in the Epistle of James. The communities are dependent on these patrons or patronesses because they can provide them with a house in which to hold their meetings, political and judicial protection, and so on. James is against this dependency, because through this the communities are seduced to *προσωποληψία* (favouritism).⁷⁸ This general critique against the Gentile-Christian communities implies a critique against Paul, according to Hengel, since Paul himself was dependent on patronesses such as Phoebe.

This leads me to the second, and by far the most important layer for Hengel, namely the critique clearly and directly focused on Paul. His mission to the Gentiles had grown so big that it needed substantial economic support.⁷⁹ This made Paul dependent on wealthy benefactors. Not only were the Gentile-Christian communities dependent on patrons/patronesses, so was Paul. This dependency not only hindered Paul from criticising the rich and prominent citizens, it also hindered him from

⁷⁶ Ibid., 54.

⁷⁷ Hengel, “Der Jakobusbrief als antipaulinische Polemik”, 51–548.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 544–546.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 532.

criticising the social stratification of Roman society.⁸⁰ James, in his polemic against Paul, comes with a warning against this implication of Pauline theology.⁸¹ In addition to the fact that the mission to the Gentiles became an economic burden, it also became a source of antagonism between the Gentile and Jewish-Christian communities. These conflicts were not theological, but of an economic character.⁸² So when James in James 2 warns against partiality, he also warns against Pauline theology. The Christians should not be dependent on wealthy patrons, because that could poison their religion.

Summary

From my reading of Elsa Tamez, Pedrito U. Maynard-Reid, Matthias Ahrens, Wesley Hiram Wachob and David Hutchinson Edgar in addition to Martin Dibelius, I have found that first, there are those who interpret the poor in the Epistle of James within a concept of pious poor. Dibelius, Wachob and Edgar are representatives of these. This interpretation makes the conflict between poor and rich in the Epistle a conflict between pious and non-pious, i.e. a religious conflict rather than a social one. Second, there are those who interpret the poor in the Epistle of James as materially poor, and the wealthy as materially rich. Maynard-Reid, Ahrens and Tamez are representatives of these. This interpretation makes the conflict between rich and poor in James a social conflict rather than a religious one. Third, there are those who understand the conflict between rich and poor in James also as a structural problem within the Roman Empire. Tamez, Ahrens and Wachob all seem to be of that opinion, and Wachob sees James' rhetoric as counter-cultural to Graeco-Roman culture. Fourth, there are those who open up for an interaction between the Epistle of James and today's readers, and there are those who do not. Those who open up for that sort of an interaction, e.g. Maynard-Reid and Tamez, immediately ask: how does the Epistle of James challenge contemporary society and Christians? Martin Hengel, on the other hand, puts the issue of poor and rich in James in quite a different context than the other scholars presented. He relates this issue directly to the conflict between Paul and James and says that James' view on poor and rich is part of his anti-Pauline polemic.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 543–544.

⁸¹ Ibid., 537.

⁸² Ibid., 534.

From these previous presentations, one has to ask whether there are interpretative needs when it comes to Jas 2:1–13. I shall address this question in the next section.

INTERPRETATIVE NEEDS AND INTERPRETATIVE CONDITIONS CONCERNING JAMES 2:1–13

None of the researchers above has engaged in a postcolonial interpretation of the Epistle of James as a whole or of the unit Jas 2:1–13. Nor has any of them directed a specific focus at differences in rank in their interpretations. It seems to me, however—and I shall argue this in chapters four and five—that the situation portrayed in Jas 2:1–13 is a situation of difference in rank rather than in wealth. Although the poor man, who I shall argue is a beggar, is poor, and the man wearing a gold ring and bright clothes is a rich man, this is not the primary difference between them. The primary difference is one of rank. The gold ring is not a unique sign of wealth but a unique sign of high rank. It is the insignia ring worn by equestrians in the first-century Roman Empire. The equestrian order was second in rank and could hold political office. A candidate for political office would wear the *toga candida*, and the Greek term for *toga candida* is the one used in Jas 2:2. Hence, I am of the opinion, and I shall argue this thoroughly in chapters four and five, that the persons we meet in Jas 2:1–13 are not only poor and rich, they are from opposite ends of the Roman rank system: a beggar and an equestrian running for political office.

That is a rather different scenario from what is presupposed in interpretations that place this text in the context of poor and rich only. All the researchers above are of the opinion that the issue in Jas 2:1–13 concerns poor and rich. There are differences of opinion as to whether the poor should be understood as only materially poor, or as pious poor or wandering charismatics. The ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος, on the other hand, is understood as a very rich person. Although some interpreters of the Epistle of James have identified the ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος as a Roman equestrian,⁸³ and a few have suggested that the ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος is wearing a

⁸³ These are Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 98–99; Tamez, *The Scandalous Message of James: Faith Without Works Is Dead*, 23; Moo, *The Letter of James*, 103; and Hartin, *James*, 117f. Hartin is however of the opinion that “the context of James does not demand such a specific identification”. Lastly, Reicke refers to the ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος as a senator, see Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, 27.

toga candida,⁸⁴ they fail to draw out the implications of this. The only one of the researchers that I have presented above, who has a reference to rank is Tamez. She refers to Laws when she says that “the gold ring may signify more than just ordinary wealth. It also suggests official social status.”⁸⁵ She goes on to cite Laws who says that the official social status is membership in the equestrian order. However, Tamez does not make an interpretative point out of this observation. For her the main focus is still that the man with the gold ring is rich: “The depiction of the rich man refers to his power and wealth, whether or not he is a roman official.”⁸⁶

There are therefore two interpretative needs concerning Jas 2:1–13 that have not been in focus in scholarly research to date. Since I am of the opinion that the ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος is an equestrian wearing a *toga candida*, hence a man who is running for political office, my interpretative starting point is somewhat different from the positioning of the researchers whom I have presented above. The context of rich and poor is of course relevant, but since none of the researchers above has focused on rank and differences in rank, there is first a clear interpretative need for a focus on rank, differences in rank, and Roman cultural etiquette concerning differences in rank. Second, there has been no postcolonial interpretation of Jas 2:1–13. I have argued in chapter one that the text is suitable for a postcolonial study and therefore there is an interpretative need for postcolonial foci such as imperial presence, mimicry, hybrid identities, centre and margin, oppressed becoming oppressors, etc., when interpreting Jas 2:1–13.

I am therefore of the opinion that there are at least two interpretative needs concerning Jas 2:1–13, and I shall focus my historical interpretation around these needs: a) rank, differences in rank, Roman cultural etiquette concerning differences in rank, and b) a postcolonial optic on the interpretation of James. My ambition is to do an overall thorough historical interpretation of Jas 2:1–13 combined with these two interpretative needs.

Against the further background of chapters one and two I shall now underline some additional premises of the interpretation. First, methodologically my point of departure will be Vernon K. Robbins’ socio-

⁸⁴ This has been suggested by Gerhard Maier, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, Historisch Theologische Auslegung Neues Testament (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 2004), 107, and Mussner, *Der Jakobusbrief*, 117. They have not however identified the man wearing a gold ring as an equestrian. Reicke does not use the term *toga candida*, but he is of the opinion that the equestrian is a candidate for elective office, see Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, 27.

⁸⁵ Tamez, *The Scandalous Message of James: Faith Without Works Is Dead*, 23.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

rhetorical interpretation. His model shall be somewhat adjusted to make it applicable to the present study. Second, a premise for the interpretation shall be that the most significant theological backgrounds for the Epistle of James are the Jewish wisdom tradition and the synoptic Jesus tradition. Third, I have concluded with a relatively late dating of the Epistle, i.e. late first century, most likely under the rule of the emperor Domitian. Fourth, a premise for the interpretation shall be that the addressees are multiple and live around the Empire. Therefore the message of the Epistle has a universal application. Fifth, although the assembly is heterogeneous with respect to ethnicity and consists of both Jewish and Gentile members, it is deeply rooted in a Jewish-Christian tradition and has a corresponding character and identity.

PART TWO

A POSTCOLONIAL INTERPRETATION OF JAMES 2:1–13

CHAPTER THREE

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TEXTURE: A SHORT OVERVIEW OF ROMAN POLITICAL HISTORY AND MARKERS OF SOCIAL AFFILIATION

INTRODUCTION

For an interpretation of the Epistle of James in a Roman context, the Roman Republic (c. 509 B.C.E.–44/31/27 B.C.E.), especially the late Roman Republic, is significant to the extent that principles of the social structures of the Roman Empire were laid during the Republic.¹ It is however important to note that the social structures were in constant flux both during the Republic and during the Empire.

The most striking difference between the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire was probably the role of the Emperor himself. Even though the Empire was governed on the basis of the governmental structures of the Republic, the Emperor had vast personal influence. I shall therefore briefly give an introduction to the government of the Republic and the roles of the *ordines*, and then give an introduction to the imperial administration with a special focus again on the roles of the *ordines*. For my interpretation of Jas 2:1–13, the most significant part of this concerns the markers of social affiliation during the first-century C.E. Empire. I shall examine this in the section ‘Markers of social affiliation in the first-century C.E. Roman Empire’ and will focus primarily on visible signs of social status, as well as Roman etiquette towards persons of different social statuses, and at the end I will ask whether this can be understood as partiality (προσωποληψία).

A note must be made on the literary sources I have used: Both in the very short introduction to the government of the Roman Republic, and in mapping markers of social affiliation in the first-century Roman Empire, the literary sources used were all written by the very privileged. The authors were either senators or equestrians. We do not have many

¹ The transition from the Roman Republic to the Roman Empire was a rather gradual process, and scholars disagree about when it becomes more accurate to talk about an Empire rather than a Republic. Some of the possible choices are Julius Caesar’s appointment as perpetual dictator (44 B.C.E.), the victory of Octavian at the battle of Actium (31 B.C.E.), or the date at which the senate granted Octavian the title ‘Augustus’ (27 B.C.E.).

literary sources not written from this perspective. This is of course a challenge when mapping markers of social affiliation and asking whether there were social inequalities and partiality. The story of the unprivileged is simply not told.² Translations of all literary texts are from the *Loeb Classical Library* unless otherwise indicated.

GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC

The Assemblies and the Magistracies

The government of the Republic was based on a system with several assemblies with different responsibilities. These assemblies were the curiate assembly (*Comitia Curiata*), the centuriate assembly (*Comitia Centuriata*), the tribal assembly (*Comitia Tributa*), the plebeian assembly (*Consilium Plebis*) and the senate. Within these assemblies there were also several magistracies, i.e. political offices. There was not one, but several points of decision-making during the Republic, and this totality of assemblies and magistracies formed the government of the Republic.³ The two most prominent of the assemblies, however, were the plebeian assembly and the senate. They dominated political life and their responsibilities were broadly speaking that the plebeian assembly passed binding laws (*plebiscites*), whereas the senate's main responsibility was the finances of the Republic. The senate also made recommendations regarding new laws to the plebeian assembly. They were the official senders and receivers of ambassadors, and the senate conducted wars.⁴ The plebeian assembly, however, had to vote over treaties proposed by the senate that declared war and made peace.⁵ The senate consisted of 300 senators, a number that

² David S. Potter, *Literary Texts and the Roman Historian*, Approaching the Ancient World (London: Routledge, 1999), 42: "The most serious difficulty with all of our literary evidence from the Roman world is that it derives from a very restricted class. It is almost exclusively male, and almost exclusively rich."

³ J.A. Crook, "Augustus: Power, Authority, Achievement," in *The Cambridge Ancient History: The Augustan Empire, 43 B.C.–A.D. 69*, ed. Alan K. Bowman, Edward Champlin, and Andrew Lintott, The Cambridge Ancient History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 118.

⁴ Fergus Millar, *Rome, the Greek World, and the East: The Roman Republic and the Augustan Revolution*, Studies in the History of Greece and Rome, vol. I (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 115.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 115.

was raised to 600 by Sulla (82–80 B.C.E.).⁶ All offices within this system of assemblies and magistracies were subject to elections, and the principles of annuality and collegiality of offices were central to the Republic. The two most prominent offices seem to have been the two consuls⁷ and the ten tribunes of the plebeians.⁸ The consul was the highest magistracy of the senate whereas the tribune of the plebeians was the highest magistracy of the plebeian assembly. The tribunes of the plebeians were the only plebeians who had access to the senate, and they even gained the right to summon the senate.⁹

Roman commanders, either consuls or praetors, executed the provincial administration during the Republic and these offices, in the same way as all the other offices, were subject to annuality and popular election.¹⁰ The responsibility for immediate strategic and diplomatic decision-making in the provinces would normally rest with these commanders, and was not subject to the senate, though it could be wise to consult with the senate, especially if the province was not too far away from Rome.¹¹ Any agreements with foreign peoples, however, were subject to ratification by the Roman senate.¹²

*The Ordines*¹³

Who would be members of the assemblies and hold magistracies? Until the Gracchi reforms (131–123 B.C.E.), there were only two *ordines* or ‘orders’ in Roman society: the senate and the plebeians (i.e. the people). This

⁶ Robin Lane Fox, *The Classical World: An Epic History of Greece and Rome* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 352. This was only one of the reforms of Sulla, see Fox, *The Classical World*, 351–353. Another reform related to the number of senators was the reform that caused anyone who held a junior magistracy to automatically become a senator. Combined with the numerical increase of senators, this would inevitably alter the power balance of the senate. The number of senators was kept at around 600 through the first three centuries C.E., see Keith Hopkins, “Elite Mobility in the Roman Empire,” *Past and Present* 32 (1965), 12.

⁷ Martin Goodman, *The Roman World: 44 BC–AD 180*, Routledge History of the Ancient World (New York: Routledge, 2006; reprint, 6), 22.

⁸ Millar, *The Roman Republic and the Augustan Revolution*, 131; Brent D. Shaw and Eric Kondratieff, “A Brief overview of the Roman ‘Constitution’ in the Republic” http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~ekondrat/Rome_Govt.html (accessed 8. November 2006).

⁹ Millar, *The Roman Republic and the Augustan Revolution*, 98.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 114.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Some of the textbooks on the Roman Republic and Empire refer to these as ‘classes’ within the Roman Empire instead of *ordines*. I have chosen not to, as I have wanted as much as possible to avoid the very easy mistake of anachronism by reading modern ideas

apparently changed under Gaius Gracchus. After the reforms the equestrians were singled out as a separate order in addition to the senatorial order.¹⁴ The Republic now had three distinct orders: the senate, the equestrian order and the people, but the new order—the equestrian order—did not seem to have any formal standing in the government of the Republic, hence most magistracies were held by senators.

GOVERNMENT OF THE EMPIRE

Transition from the Republic to the Empire

The transition from the Republic to the Empire might seem like a somewhat chaotic endeavour, and roughly speaking this transformation went on during the whole first century B.C.E.¹⁵ It was a period of instability within the Republic. For part of this period the Roman world was governed by the triumvirates. The first had the character of an informal alliance between Gaius Julius Caesar, Marcus Licinius Crassus and Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus.¹⁶ The second triumvirate on the other hand had a more formal status and was held by Octavian (later Augustus), Marcus Aemilius Lepidus and Mark Antony.¹⁷ The triumvirate in this latter form abandoned the principle of annuality, and the triumvirs held their position for five years. It was not the custom during the Republic to be elected to the same magistracy for two consecutive years; the triumvirs, however, held their position for two consecutive periods of five years each, i.e. from

of class societies and Marxist class theories into our understanding of Roman society. I shall therefore use the term *ordine* or 'order', as the Romans themselves did.

¹⁴ Plinius, *Natural History*, 33.8. (33.32–34) in Gaius Secundus Plinius, *Natural History. With an English translation in ten volumes*, trans. H. Rackham, 1st ed., LCL, vol. IX (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1961; reprint, 1). The references in LCL are different from other references to Plinius Secundus (Pliny the Elder). Hence I shall cite both sets of reference-systems. The ones that are not in brackets are references within the LCL system.

¹⁵ For more detailed studies of this period, see e.g. Ronald Syme, *The Roman Revolution*, 1st ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002; reprint, 4); Ronald Syme, *The Augustan Aristocracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Millar, *The Roman Republic and the Augustan Revolution*.

¹⁶ Bruce A. Marshall, "Julius Caesar," in *ABD*, ed. David Noel Freedman and Astrid Beck (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1126.

¹⁷ Christopher Pelling, "The Triumviral Period," in *The Cambridge Ancient History: The Augustan Empire, 43 B.C.–A.D. 69*, ed. Alan K. Bowman, Edward Champlin, and Andrew Lintott, CAH (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1; Bruce A. Marshall, "Mark Antony (Person)," in *ABD*, ed. David Noel Freedman and Astrid Beck (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 541.

43–33 B.C.E. Was the formal position of the assemblies abolished or not during the second triumvirate? This is a debated issue, but even though the senate might have held some of its position, its importance probably decreased during the triumvirate and magistrates seem to have been appointed rather than elected.¹⁸

In this context, what was ‘the Augustan revolution’?¹⁹ Through Augustus’ take-over of power, in which the battle of Actium (31 B.C.E.) was a central element, he was able both to restore a peaceful situation in the Empire, and to reform the government of the Empire.²⁰ How did Augustus reform the government of the Empire? One of the main achievements of Augustus was a reform of the governing class.²¹ First, he in many ways gave the senate more power than it had had under the Republic. Second, he consolidated the equestrian order, so that he and later emperors could draw officials from that order, and third, he ensured an executive civil service staffed by ‘slaves of Caesar’ and ‘freedmen of Augustus’. He also reinforced the principles of annuality and collegiality for office holders. However, in principle he held all power.²² Consequently the magistracies of the two consuls for example, however important, were not as prominent as during the Republic.

Further, even though there were elections for the magistracies, Augustus controlled these elections completely.²³ He did this through deciding who could be elected, a custom that emperors after him continued. The government of the provinces changed somewhat as well. Augustus divided the provinces of the Empire into two categories: imperial and public (27 B.C.E.).²⁴ The main difference between these two seems to have been

¹⁸ For a more specific overview over this debate, see Millar, *The Roman Republic and the Augustan Revolution*, 241–270. See also Richard J.A. Talbert, *The Senate of Imperial Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 341, specifically about appointments rather than elections. According to Pelling, “The Triumviral Period,” 4, elections took place, though we do not know to what extent, but the triumvirs controlled appointment to the consulship and many of the lower offices.

¹⁹ The term ‘the Augustan revolution’ is used among others by Fergus Millar about the transition from Republic to Empire. Ronald Syme, on the other hand, prefers to use the term ‘the Roman revolution’.

²⁰ For an overview of Augustus’ reform of the government of the Empire, see Crook, “Augustus: Power, Authority, Achievement” 123–140.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 123–130.

²² *Ibid.*, 118–123.

²³ David S. Potter, “Augustus (Emperor),” in *ABD*, ed. David Noel Freedman and Astrid Beck (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 526.

²⁴ Millar, *The Roman Republic and the Augustan Revolution*, 315. Millar argues that the use of the term ‘senatorial provinces’ is insufficient as the sources we have all tell us that

the method of appointment to office and the length of tenure. The public provinces were governed by proconsuls selected by lot by the people of Rome. Tenure for these offices was one year. The imperial provinces, on the other hand, were governed by legates of Augustus. These legates were appointed by the emperor himself and served until they were replaced.²⁵ Otherwise it seems that both the proconsuls and the legates of Augustus had their *mandata* from the emperor;²⁶ they were both independently responsible for the government of their provinces, i.e. they answered neither to the senate nor to the emperor, and both the emperor and the senate made regulations affecting the provinces.²⁷

The senate was in some ways more powerful during the early Empire than during the Republic because their resolutions were treated as binding laws without having to be ratified by the plebeian assembly.²⁸ It also seems that Augustus used the senate as an advisory council for himself.²⁹ But at the same time, as long as there were no real elections, one has to question the powers of the assemblies as well.

These principles of government that Augustus institutionalised formed the basis of the government of the Empire during the following centuries. Collegiality and annuality of offices were central, the assemblies, especially the senate, had an important position, the equestrian order was a pool from which to draw officials and there was a civil service staffed by 'slaves of Caesar' and 'freedmen of Augustus'. The bottom line, however, was that the emperor had all power. There were elections for some of the magistracies while others were appointed by the emperor, but even the magistrates that were elected were in practice appointed by the emperor, as he would have to recommend a person for a magistracy if this person was to be elected. Another way that the emperor had of controlling who

Augustus called the provinces either *publicae provinciae* or *provinciae populi Romani*. The whole chapter "Senatorial Provinces: An Institutionalized Ghost" (pp. 314–320) is an argument for this.

²⁵ Ibid., 272, 315ff. Whether the difference between these two in real life was as big as in theory is of course an open question. Given that the emperor would decide who could actually be elected anyway, there was little difference between an imperial appointment and an election.

²⁶ Ibid., 274–275.

²⁷ Ibid., 289.

²⁸ Goodman, *The Roman World*, 94, and Crook, "Augustus: Power, Authority, Achievement," 123. Against this, see Ségolène Demougin, *L'Ordre Équestre sous les Julio-Claudiens*, Collection de L'École Française de Rome, vol. 108 (Rome: École Française de Rome Palais Farnèse, 1988), 137f. According to Demougin, Augustus actually reduced the power of the senate, probably due to his need to control the senate.

²⁹ Potter, "Augustus," 526.

was elected, was to control the number of posts up for election and the number of candidates up for election. Some emperors would keep the number of candidates lower than the number of posts, whereas others would keep them equal. Some would also keep the number of candidates higher than the number of posts, but still there would be no candidate that was not recommended by the emperor.³⁰

Who could be elected to offices? During the Republic the offices that were not connected to the plebeian assembly were reserved for the senators. This changed during the first century C.E. as the equestrian order became more and more consolidated as a distinct order separate from the senatorial order and the people. Consequently senators and equestrians could be appointed, elected or selected by lot.

The Equestrian Order in the Government of the Empire

From that time onward the Knighthood definitely became a third element in the state, and the name of the Equestrian Order came to be added to the formula "The Senate and People of Rome."³¹

Already from the time of Gaius Gracchus there had been three orders: senatorial, equestrian and plebeian. These three orders were further consolidated during the reign of Augustus:

Augustus, der ja in so mancher Hinsicht an die Bestrebungen der Gracchen anknüpft, so manchen Gedanken der Gracchen verwirklicht hat, ihnen auch in dem Punkt gefolgt ist, dass er die herrschenden Klassen im Staat in zwei deutlich voneinander getrennte Stände auseinanderhielt, den Senatorenstand, den er erst zu einer geschlossenen Standesgruppe gemacht, und den Ritterstand, den er einheitlich gestaltet hat.³²

Augustus' further consolidation of the equestrian order as an order second in rank had as a consequence that the equestrians as well as the senators could hold offices:

³⁰ For further reading about the process of elections and appointments for magistracies during the Empire, see Talbert, *Senate of Imperial Rome*, 341–345. See also Hopkins, "Elite Mobility in the Roman Empire" 12.

³¹ Plinius Secundus, *Natural History*, 33.8 (33.34) in Plinius, *NH IX*. This refers to the Gracchi reform, which distinguished a third order, the equestrian order, from the second order, the senatorial order. This reform was consolidated by Marcus Cicero during his consulship in 63 B.C. It was further consolidated by the Emperor Augustus.

³² Arthur Stein, *Der Römische Ritterstand: Ein Beitrag zur Sozial- und Personengeschichte des Römischen Reiches*, Münchener Beiträge zur Papyrusforschung und Antiken Rechtsgeschichte (München: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1927; reprint, 1963), 105.

At the elections for tribunes if there were not candidates enough of senatorial rank, he made appointments from among the knights, with the understanding that after their term they might remain in whichever order they wished. Moreover, since many knights whose property was diminished during the civil wars did not venture to view the games from the fourteen rows through fear of the penalty of the law regarding theatres, he declared that none were liable to its provisions, if they themselves or their parents had ever possessed a knight's estate.³³

Augustus' reorganisation of the equestrian order was significant for the administration of the Empire, because he and later emperors could now draw officials to the new posts from this order. In other words, the equestrian order represented a pool of potential holders of political offices.³⁴ It is important to note that to hold an office had enormous financial implications as there were severe responsibilities connected to these privileges. One had to rely on one's own private resources to run state business. For example, the *praefectus annonae* of a city would normally finance the city's entire corn supply from his own means. In other words, holders of offices and candidates for offices inevitably had to be very rich.³⁵

Augustus' reorganisation also consisted of an increased number of equestrians, and they were no longer only recruited from the aristocracy.³⁶ After the reorganisation, members of the equestrian order were given responsibility for crucial matters such as finances, tax-collection, and corn supply (*praefectus annonae*).³⁷ It was also equestrians who administered the emperor's private property.³⁸ The *aediles* were also selected from

³³ Suetonius, *The lives of the Caesars: Augustus*, 40.1, in Gaius Tranquillus Suetonius, *Suetonius in Two Volumes*, trans. J.C. Rolfe, LCL, vol. I (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989).

³⁴ Crook, "Augustus: Power, Authority, Achievement," 127–128; G.H. Stevenson, "The Imperial Administration," in *The Cambridge Ancient History: The Augustan Empire 44 B.C.–A.D. 70*, ed. S.A. Cook, F.E. Adcock, and M.P. Charlesworth, CAH (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 185; Hopkins, "Elite Mobility in the Roman Empire," 12.

³⁵ See Goodman, *The Roman World*, 87.

³⁶ Demougin, *L'Ordre Équestre*, 136.

³⁷ Géza Alföldy, "Die Stellund der Ritter in der Führungsschicht des Imperium Romanum," *Chiron* 11 (1981), 173f.

³⁸ Both Bowman and Talbert refer to the finances as one of the responsibilities of the equestrian order, see Alan K. Bowman, "Provincial Administration and Taxation," in *The Cambridge Ancient History: The Augustan Empire, 43 B.C.–A.D. 69*, ed. Alan K. Bowman, Edward Champlin, and Andrew Lintott, CAH (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 364; Richard J.A. Talbert, "The Senate and Senatorial and Equestrian posts," in *The Cambridge Ancient History: The Augustan Empire, 43 B.C.–A.D. 69*, ed. Alan K. Bowman, Edward Champlin, and Andrew Lintott, CAH (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 340. Talbert also argues that equestrians held responsibility for administration of the emperor's private property, see Talbert, "Senatorial and Equestrian posts" 340–341. The

this order. However rare, there are examples of equestrians becoming governors of provinces.³⁹ An important aspect of Augustus' reorganisation of the equestrian order was that they were loyal supporters of Augustus. In the political play, the senate had the role of the opposition, whereas the equestrian order very rarely opposed Augustus.⁴⁰ The role of the equestrian order in the imperial administration developed during the first century C.E., and it is fair to say that an equestrian civil service emerged.⁴¹ Under the emperor Domitian (81–96 C.E.) there was an extensive use of equestrians in the imperial administration, partly because Domitian, as Augustus, increased the number of equestrians.⁴² By this time the equestrian order was part of the imperial administration all over the Empire. In a city of some size one would meet both senators and equestrians as part of the administration.

office of *praefectus annonae* is both according to Stevenson, "The Imperial Administration," 202, and Goodman, *The Roman World*, 98, an office that members of the equestrian order held.

³⁹ The province of Egypt is an example of this, see Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, trans. Earnest Cary, LCL, vol. VI (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1925), 53.13.1–3; Stevenson, "The Imperial Administration" 215; Talbert, "Senatorial and Equestrian posts" 340–341; Crook, "Augustus: Power, Authority, Achievement" 128; Alan K. Bowman, "Egypt" in *The Cambridge Ancient History: The Augustan Empire, 43 B.C.–A.D. 69*, ed. Alan K. Bowman, Edward Champlin, and Andrew Lintott, CAH, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 679. The three first prefects of Egypt, all recruited from the equestrian order, were C. Cornelius Gallus (30 B.C.E.), Aelius Gallus and P. Petronius (25 B.C.E.), see Erich S. Gruen, "The Expansion of the Empire under Augustus" in *The Cambridge Ancient History: The Augustan Empire, 43 B.C.–A.D. 69*, ed. Alan K. Bowman, Edward Champlin, and Andrew Lintott, CAH, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 148–149. The prefects of Egypt held their offices for three years on average, see Bowman, "Egypt" 681. It can be argued that the office of prefect of Egypt developed to hold an immense latent power, as demonstrated by Tiberius Iulius Alexander in 69 C.E. when he supported Vespasian's bid for the imperial throne, see Bowman, "Egypt" 681. Judea, as long as it was not a client kingdom (it was a client kingdom 37–4 B.C.E. and 41–44 C.E.), was also governed by equestrians: 6–41 C.E. by prefects of equestrian rank (to some extent subordinate to the imperial legate in Syria), see Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135): A New English Version Revised and Edited by Geza Vermes & Fergus Millar*, vol. I (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1973), 357, and 44–66 C.E. by procurators of equestrian rank.

⁴⁰ Demougin, *L'Ordre Équestre*, 139f.

⁴¹ Millar, *The Roman Republic and the Augustan Revolution*, 75.

⁴² Hans Georg Pflaum, *Essai sur les Procurateurs Équestres sous le Haut-Empire Romain: Thèse Principale Présentée à la Faculté des Lettres de L'Université de Paris* (Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient Adrien Maisonneuve, 1950), 50f.

MARKERS OF SOCIAL AFFILIATION IN THE FIRST-CENTURY C.E.
ROMAN EMPIRE

Introduction

First-century Roman society was a society with a vast number of regulations of social relations.⁴³ The primary regulation was between citizens and non-citizens. Among the citizens, there were three distinct orders: the senatorial order, the equestrian order and the plebeians, hence the formula “the senate and the people of Rome and the equestrian order”.⁴⁴ Together with the judicial system a regulation of social relations between the orders was, from my point of view, paramount to the existence of the Empire. These latter regulations were sometimes part of the judicial system, e.g. the marriage laws. But more often, regulations of the social relations were more part of Roman etiquette that one just had to know. The two first orders led their lives on the very privileged end of these social regulations. They were honoured e.g. by seating privileges, *salutatio* ceremonies and inscriptions. These were highly visible signs of the Roman etiquette that indicated to the masses, and at the same time taught the masses, that one should honour members of the first two orders by giving them privileges.⁴⁵ Contexts in which social regulations became especially important and visible were public contexts. The honouring of the persons at the privileged end of the society happened in public places such as the theatre, the circus, the public games, and religious life. Even though the *salutatio* ceremonies took place within the private *domus*, they were very much public ceremonies.⁴⁶

⁴³ See Hopkins, “Elite Mobility in the Roman Empire” 12–13, where the system of stratification during the Roman empire is presented. See also P.R.C. Weaver, “Social Mobility in the Early Roman Empire: the Evidence of the Imperial Freedmen and Slaves” *Past and Present* 37 (1967). The article shows us a highly stratified society.

⁴⁴ Plinius, *NH IX* 33.8 (33.34). The complete Latin sentence goes “ab illo tempore plane hoc tertium corpus in re p. factum est, coepitque adici senatui populoque Romano et equester ordo”.

⁴⁵ There is an interesting example in Tacitus of two Frisian kings who come to Rome and do not quite know the etiquette of seating privileges, so while in the theatre they have to ask how to distinguish the different orders from each other, and who is sitting where. See Tacitus, *The Annals*, trans. John Jackson, LCL, vol. V (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991), 13.54.

⁴⁶ Richard Saller, “Status and Patronage” in *The Cambridge Ancient History: The High Empire, A.D. 70–192*, ed. Alan K. Bowman, Peter Garnsey, and Dominic Rathbone, CAH, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 829.

Centres and Margins in the Empire

Although there was only one major centre, the city of Rome, it seems that there were several minor centres and several margins within the Empire.

On a non-individual level, geography mattered. Geographically there were several important markers: the city of Rome was clearly the most prominent centre of the Empire. It was the cultural, economical, political and military centre of the Empire. As the founding city of the Empire, it was the city that all the other cities imitated. Compared to Rome, provinces, cities and colonies were margins.⁴⁷ Another geographical marker was between the rural areas in the provinces of the Empire and the cities. The cities were local centres within the provinces, comparable to Rome as the main centre. Yet a different marker was whether the area was a part of the Empire at all. If the area was not part of the Empire, it was clearly a margin in relation to the Empire. Still, the area could be important due to economical, political or military interest, or even due to commerce. It could even be desirable to include it in the Empire.

On an individual level, one might also speak about centres and margins. First of all citizenship mattered; the principal distinctions within the Roman Empire were primarily between citizens and non-citizens, and secondarily between slaves and free.⁴⁸ A citizen of Rome belonged to the centre, and hence had privileges within the judicial system that a non-citizen did not have. There is a well-known example of the judicial right of a citizen in the New Testament, namely Paul's arrests and the turn of events after he was arrested.⁴⁹

When it comes to the distinction between slaves and free, the primary difference seems to be that a slave had no ownership over his or her life and therefore was marginalised. A slave was in principle a commodity, comparable to other commodities rather than to free persons. There are however indications that some slaves were actually very rich, as well as being important to the imperial administration. These were the slaves of

⁴⁷ 'Provinces' are generally understood to be larger geographical areas included in the Roman Empire, such as the province of Egypt or the province of Bithynia-Pontus. See Goodman, *The Roman World*, 139–141. 'Colonies', on the other hand, are generally understood to be cities within the Empire inhabited predominantly by Roman ex-soldiers, see "Colony", 324 in Betty Radice, "Key to terms" in *Suetonius: The twelve Caesars*, ed. Betty Radice, The Penguin Classics, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979). 'Cities' were the main foundation of the Empire and their role during the first century C.E. was far more important than the role of the colonies.

⁴⁸ Saller, "Status and Patronage" 818.

⁴⁹ Acts 16:35–39 and 22:23–29.

the imperial household and other big households, and they could both have control over great wealth and have heavy responsibilities such as supervising free and unfree workers, and hence had influence.⁵⁰ These particular slaves, if freed, often kept their influence and had the opportunity to change their and their family's social status. Consequently one cannot argue that all slaves were marginalised, as long as some of them actually had a great deal of influence. However, the vast majority of slaves did not have any influence or any wealth, and even though some of them had, their principal status was still a non-status. It is hard to give a percentage of how many slaves there were in the Roman Empire at a certain point in time, but there seems to have been a rising need for slaves. Frier argues that around 15% of the population during the high empire might have been slaves. That would constitute up to 7 million slaves.⁵¹ Although this is a bit later than our time frame, it gives us an indication of the slave population in the late first century as well. Most of the new slaves seem to have been provided from outside of the Empire or from the new colonies.⁵² Once a slave, one was determined to be sold and bought and moved around the Empire, and it was a mobile form of capital.⁵³

Among the free, there was also a distinction between those who were born free and those who were freedmen and -women. Principally a freedman did not have access to the senate or the equestrian order. However, this seems to have been practised differently by different emperors.

Like geography and citizenship, gender mattered. Even though women were benefactors, and were saluted and honoured in inscriptions, still their situation was rather complicated.⁵⁴ Even though women could pursue high status and had nearly the same property rights as men, this all belonged to the private law. They could still not claim independent rank, though they could have considerable social power through their wealth.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Saller, "Status and Patronage" 824. These particular slaves, if freed, often kept their influence and had the opportunity to change their and their family's social status.

⁵¹ See Bruce W. Frier, "Demography" in *The Cambridge Ancient History: The high empire, A.D. 70–192*, ed. Alan K. Bowman, Peter Garnsey, and Dominic Rathbone, CAH, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 812.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 810.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 809–810.

⁵⁴ E.g. the Iunia Theodora-inscription at Corinth from 43 or 57 C.E., where Iunia Theodora is described in traditionally honourable terms that were used in inscriptions. The inscription can be read both in Greek and English in Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2003), 205–210.

⁵⁵ Saller, "Status and Patronage" 828, 833–834.

If e.g. a citizen woman was married to a non-citizen man, their children would become non-citizens.⁵⁶

Further there was a significant distinction among the citizens between patricians and plebeians, and between elite and non-elite.⁵⁷ The patricians and the wider elite represented the centre of the Empire. They were men belonging to the senatorial and equestrian orders, and they were the ones who could hold political offices, hence were the most prominent individuals within the Empire. The plebeians had considerably less personal influence.

Signs of Rank

In an Empire where rank so clearly mattered, both due to special privileges, eligibility to political offices and due to general citizen privileges, visible signs of rank would be important. The three most prominent signs of rank were the wearing of a gold ring, clothing and seating privileges. These three signs are all referred to in Jas 2:2–3 in this order, hence I shall organise the following in this same order. Further signs of both rank and status were the *salutatio* ceremonies and inscriptions in honour of persons, which I shall both introduce briefly.

⁵⁶ Susan Treggiari, "Social Status and Social Legislation" in *The Cambridge Ancient History: The Augustan Empire, 43 B.C.–A.D. 69*, ed. Alan K. Bowman, Edward Champlin, and Andrew Lintott, CAH, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 894.

⁵⁷ During the first-century Roman Empire 'patricians' are understood to be the most ancient aristocratic families. One gathers that there were fourteen patrician clans in the early empire, see "Patricians" in Radice, "Key to terms," 326. 'Plebeians', on the other hand, were the general body of Roman citizens, see "Plebeians" in Radice, "Key to terms," 326. The equestrian order is probably not included in these definitions. The equestrian order is however included in the broader term 'elite', which has a looser definition than patricians, in the sense that the elite consisted not only of patricians, but also of citizens of high rank and status, i.e. senators, equestrians and possibly freedmen and -women who had become rich benefactors in the cities. The non-elite based on this definition would be everyone else. I have, following Saller, tried to differentiate between rank and status. Status is as "a man's [...] prestige or honour as perceived by those around him", Saller, "Status and Patronage" 828. Rank on the other hand is a person's formal position inside or outside of the *ordines*. The case of the freedmen is somewhat complicated. It seems that there was a development in the late first century and the second century which allowed freedmen to enter the equestrian and senatorial orders on certain premises, i.e. if they had the senatorial or equestrian census. That would give them high rank. It also seems that very rich freedmen, although not having entered any of the orders, could be equally important beneficiaries in society, something that would give them high status.

Gold Rings

Finally in the ninth year in office of the Emperor Tiberius⁵⁸ the Order of Knights was united into a single body; and in the Consulship of Gaius Asinius Pollio and Gaius Antistius Vetus,⁵⁹ in the 775th year since the foundation of Rome, a regulation was established authorizing who should wear rings; [...] nobody should have this right except one who was himself a free-born man whose father and father's father had been free-born also, and who had been rated as the owner of 400,000 sesterces and had been entitled under the Julian law as to the theatre to sit in the fourteen front rows of seats.⁶⁰

Now the matter of the gold rings is as follows. Of the ancient Romans no one, not merely of those who had once been slaves but even of those who had been brought up as free, was allowed to wear gold rings, except the senators and the knights, as has been stated; and for this reason they are given to such freedmen as the ruler may choose, even though these men are already wearing gold in other ways, as a mark of honour indicating that they are superior to the status of freedmen and are eligible to become knights.⁶¹

There seem to have been several uses of gold rings and a development of the use of rings both during the Republic and the Empire. Rings could simply be used as ornaments.⁶² Used as ornaments a gold ring specifically would be a certain sign of wealth, as gold held high value.⁶³ Rings also had more practical uses as can be seen in Plinius Secundus, who writes about the subject of rings in his *Natural History* 33.4–12 (33.8–41). According to him ambassadors were the only ones who wore the gold ring in the second and first centuries B.C.E., and only when on embassy.⁶⁴ Rings were also used as signet rings,⁶⁵ as a sign of wealth that bordered

⁵⁸ Emperor 14–37 C.E.

⁵⁹ 22 C.E.

⁶⁰ Plinius, *Natural History*, 33.8 (33.32–34), in Plinius, *NH IX*.

⁶¹ Cassius Dio, 48.45.7–9 in Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, trans. Earnest Cary, LCL, vol. V (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989).

⁶² F.H. Marshall, *Catalogue of the Finger Rings, Greek, Etruscan, and Roman, in the Departments of Antiquities, British Museum* (London: The Trustees of the British Museum, 1968), xxiii–xxviii.

⁶³ Robert Laffineur, "Polychrysos Mykene: Toward a Definition of Mycenaean Gold-work" in *Ancient Jewelry and Archaeology*, ed. Adriana Calinescu (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 104. Due to the high value of gold Laffineur suggests that the wearing of gold rings would be limited to the ruling orders. This seems like a relevant conclusion, but at the same time we know that there were individuals not belonging to the two first orders who had still accumulated wealth and thus could afford gold jewelry as well, so the wearing of gold rings strictly on the basis of wealth would not necessarily limit its use strictly to the first two orders.

⁶⁴ Plinius, *Natural History* 33.4 (33.8–13) in Plinius, *NH IX*.

⁶⁵ In addition to Plinius, see Marshall, *Catalogue of the Finger Rings*, xv–xviii. On the gold ring as a signet for Christians, see Clement, *The Instructor*, 1st ed., The Ante-Nicene

on vulgar luxury,⁶⁶ but most importantly in this context: as a mark of equestrian rank.⁶⁷ This latter seems to be the main use of the gold ring in the first century C.E.; a gold ring was a mark of equestrian rank, and the only ones who were allowed to wear it, were members of the equestrian order and senators, although it seems that in practical life, senators did not wear gold rings. Hence it became a distinctive mark for the equestrian order. Stein argues in *Der Römische Ritterstand* that instead of saying that a person was an *equites*, one would rather refer either to his clothes, i.e. the *angustus clavus*, his seating privileges, his wealth or his gold ring, and everybody would know that one was referring to a man of equestrian rank.⁶⁸ In addition, it seems that the emperor himself could bestow the

Fathers: Translations of The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325, vol. II (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989; reprint, First), 285–286. According to Clement of Alexandria, a finger ring of gold was only permitted for Christians as signet rings and the seal should either be a dove, a fish, a ship scudding before the wind, a musical lyre or an anchor.

⁶⁶ Plinius, *Natural History* 33.4 (33.8–13), in Plinius, *NH IX*.

⁶⁷ Plinius' main point in *Natural History*, 33.4–12 (33.8–41) is that the gold ring is a mark of equestrian rank. He also states that the gold ring constituted an order between the senators and the plebeians. See 33.7 (33.29–30). On the gold ring as a mark of equestrian rank, see in addition to Plinius and Cassius Dio, Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars: Julius Caesar*, in Suetonius, *Suetonius in Two Volumes*, trans. J.C. Rolfe, *Ibid.*, vol. I (1989). See especially *Julius Caesar* 33 and parts of 39. In *Julius Caesar* 33 it is clear that a gold ring is a mark of equestrian rank as it refers to a rather unfortunate misunderstanding: During a speech Julius Caesar was gesturing and pointing to the finger of his left hand. For those who did not hear what he was saying, this gesture clearly meant that he had promised them the right of the equestrian ring and the equestrian census of 400,000 sesterces. What Julius Caesar said, however, was that he would tear his ring from his hand for those who helped him to defend his honour. Therefore he was making this gesture. But the misunderstanding shows us that the gold ring was a mark of equestrian rank. On rings as a mark of dignity, see also Marshall, *Catalogue of the Finger Rings*, xviii–xxi, specifically p. xx regarding the equestrian's right to wear a gold ring. Iron and silver rings could also be used as betrothal rings and as charms against the evil eye or even to cure a scorpion's bite, see Marshall, *Catalogue of the Finger Rings*, xxi–xxii. There is a reference in Plutarchus as well, where the gold ring is a sign of nobility, see Plutarchus, *Marius* 43 in Plutarchus, *Plutarch's Lives in Eleven Volumes*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin, LCL, vol. IX (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988). The context here is that Marius became so violent that nobody could be safe from being killed by his bodyguard. To facilitate their master's escape from Marius' raging anger, Cornutus' slaves put his gold ring on a dead body and thus tricked Marius' guards to believe that Cornutus was dead. Hence his ring was clearly significant. According to Posidonius it seems that the gold ring was a mark of equestrians also slightly earlier than the first century. See Posidonius, *Fragmenta (Theiler)*, Fragment 247 line 44. This Theiler fragment corresponds to the Jacoby 2a, 87, F, fragment 36 line 56. The Greek texts both for the Theiler and the Jacoby fragment have been found in *TLG*, see L. Berkowitz and K.A. Squitier, eds., *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae: Canon of Greek Authors and Work* (1990). at <http://www.tlg.uci.edu/>

⁶⁸ See Stein, *Der Römische Ritterstand*, 48: "wie auch andere Insignien des Ritterstandes metonymisch für den Stand selbst angeführt werden. Bald ist nur von dem Ritterzensus,

right to wear a gold ring upon whomever he liked.⁶⁹ During the second century C.E. this gradually made the wearing of a gold ring less significant. Justinian's *The Digest* 40.10 shows this, as both freedmen and women are given the right to wear a gold ring.⁷⁰

Still the main point remains: in the first-century Roman Empire a man wearing a gold ring belonged to the equestrian order.⁷¹ That would also mean that the man was probably very rich, both because the equestrian census was 400,000 sesterces, a considerable sum of money, and because gold was expensive.

Clothing

That flatterer led along gaping by white-robed Ambition—is he master of himself?⁷²

Aber im allgemeinen ist der schmale Purpursaum an der unter der Toga sichtbaren Stelle der Tunica, der *angustus clavus*, das Kennzeichen des Ritterstandes, so wie der *latus clavus* das des Senatorenstandes, ja, es werden die davon abgeleiteten Adjektiva *angusticlavius* und *laticlavius* als Bezeichnungen für die Angehörigen des Ritterstandes und des Senatorenstandes

bald nur vom Goldring die Rede, ein anderes Mal wird bloß der Theaterplatz, dann wieder bloß der *angustus clavus* hervorgehoben, wenn der Ritterstand als Ganzes gemeint ist."

⁶⁹ See e.g. Plinius, *Natural History*, 33.8 (33.32–34); Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 48.45.7–9; Suetonius, *Julius Caesar* 33; Plutarchus, *Galba* 7.3 in Plutarchus, *Plutarch's Lives in Eleven Volumes*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin, LCL, vol. XI (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994). See also Justinian, *The Digest*, 40.10 in Theodor Mommsen, Paul Krueger, and Alan Watson, eds., *The Digest of Justinian*, vol. III (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985). Though Justinian lived in the fifth and sixth centuries C.E., at least parts of *The Digest* 40.10 are still relevant as it refers to the *Lex Julia et Papia*. One part of this reference refers to the time of Commodus (180–192) and is thus slightly too late for a study of the first century. It also seems from sources from the late Republic that their commanders could bestow gold rings upon persons who had shown exceptional skill in wars. See e.g. Cicero, *Against Verres*, 2.3.80 in Cicero, *The Verrine Orations*, trans. L.H.G. Greenwood, LCL, vol. I (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988).

⁷⁰ Mommsen, Krueger, and Watson, eds., *The Digest*.

⁷¹ See also Treggiari, "Social Status and Social Legislation" 875; Stevenson, "The Imperial Administration" 185–189; Saller, "Status and Patronage" 821–822; Theodor Mommsen, *Abriss des Römischen Staatsrechts* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982), 37f; Stein, *Der Römische Ritterstand*, 31–49.

Against the gold ring solely as a mark of equestrian rank, see R.A. Higgins, *Greek and Roman Jewelry*, 1st ed. (London: Methuen, 1961). Higgins is of the opinion that the use of gold rings was not restricted to the equestrian order, but quite contrary that it was "freely bestowed on all and sundry". This might be the case during the high empire and towards the end of the imperial period, but the literary evidence from the first century is in my opinion quite clear on the limitations of the use of gold rings.

⁷² Persius, *Satires*, trans. Susanna Morton Braund, LCL (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), 5.177. The Latin expression used is *cretata ambitio* which may be translated either 'white-robed ambition' or 'chalked ambition'.

verwendet, in der gleichen Weise, wie auch andere Insignien des Ritterstandes metonymisch für den Stand selbst angeführt werden.⁷³

Even more visible than the gold ring were of course the clothes one was wearing. Both during the Republic and the Empire, clothes were not a matter of indifference. Clothing was a matter of fashion, but more importantly, clothing mattered as a sign of a person's rank and position in society. Hence it is necessary to give an introduction to the significance of different garments and what they communicated.

Two garments were commonly worn by Roman men and had symbolic significance: the toga and the tunic. The toga was worn over the tunic and was normally of wool, whereas the tunic was normally made of linen. A citizen, unlike a non-citizen, had the right to wear the white toga.⁷⁴ It was often called the *toga pura* or the *toga virilis* and was worn by Roman men of legal age, i.e. from around the time when they were 14–16 years old.⁷⁵ This *toga pura* or *toga virilis* was not to be confused with the *toga candida*, which was bleached to a very bright white colour, and was used by persons who were candidates for political offices, hence the expression *cretata ambitio* in Persius.⁷⁶ Not all citizens could wear the *toga candida*,

⁷³ Stein, *Der Römische Ritterstand*, 48.

⁷⁴ Saller, "Status and Patronage" 821.

⁷⁵ See "Toga" in P.G.W. Glare, *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 8th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 2003; reprint, 13), 1945–1946. See also Seneca, *Ad Lucilium: Epistulae Morales in Three Volumes*, trans. R.M. Gummere, LCL, vol. IV (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1970–1979), 4.2.3; Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars: Augustus*, 94.10.1 in Suetonius, *Suetonius in Two Volumes*, vol. I, and Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars: Vespasian*, 2.2.1 in Gaius Tranquillus Suetonius, *Suetonius in Two Volumes*, trans. J.C. Rolfe, LCL, vol. II (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979).

⁷⁶ See e.g. Livius 27.34.12.3; 37.57.13.3 and 39.39.2.4 in Livius, *Livy in fourteen volumes*, trans. Frank Gardner Moore, 1st ed., LCL, vol. VII (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1950; reprint, 1); Livius, *Livy in Fourteen Volumes*, trans. Evan T. Sage, LCL, vol. X (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1935), and Livius, *Livy in fourteen volumes*, trans. Evan T. Sage, 1st ed., LCL, vol. XI (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1949; reprint, 1). These references all represent the time of the Roman Republic, more specifically the third and second centuries B.C.E. See also Isidorus, *Etymologiarum sive originum*, Scriptorum Classicorum Bibliotheca Oxoniensis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1911; reprint, 1985), 19.24.6; Persius, *Satires*, 5.177 as cited above; and Plinius Secundus, *Natural History*, 7.34 (7.120.2) in Plinius, *Natural History. With and English Translation in Ten Volumes*, trans. H. Rackham, 1st ed., LCL, vol. II (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University press, 1961; reprint, 2). The Greek expression for the Latin *toga candida*, is ἐσθῆς λαμπρά, see "λαμπρός" in Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Sir Henry Stuart Jones, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon* 9th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940, reprint, 1978). *LSJ* uses Polybius, *The Histories*, trans. W.R. Paton, LCL (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), 10.5.1 as a reference for the Greek terminology used for the *toga candida*. Although Polybius was born c. 208 B.C.E., and the

as the wearer should belong to one of the first two orders, which were the orders eligible for offices.⁷⁷ The *toga praetexta* was primarily worn by those senators who were or had been curule magistrates.⁷⁸ It was also worn by children. Further there was the *toga picta*, which was a purple toga embroidered with gold worn by triumphing generals.⁷⁹ This toga was often worn by the triumphant one together with the *tunica palmata*, which was a tunic embroidered with palm leaves.⁸⁰ The *tunica palmata* was also worn by the magistrates presiding over the games. The tunics in addition represented a highly visible distinction between the members of the senatorial and equestrian orders, as the above quotation from Stein shows. The broad purple band, *latus clavus*, on the visible part of the tunic was the distinguishing mark of a member of the senatorial order. The narrow purple band, *angustus clavus*, on the other hand, was the distinguishing mark of a member of the equestrian order.⁸¹

These togas and tunics were all somehow an exhibition of wealth. At the other end of the social scale, however, garments were significant as well. If a person did not have an outer garment it was a sign that this person was absolutely poor.⁸² This person would only wear an undergarment and through this display low social status and rank.⁸³ Poor persons could also be labelled *pullati* due to their unclean garment, *pullum*.⁸⁴

To sum up, both gold rings and garments were significant signs of a person's rank in first-century Roman society; a normal citizen would have the

main part of his history covers the years 264–146 B.C.E. this reference is significant due to the linguistics.

⁷⁷ Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 52.20.1–5.

⁷⁸ See "Toga" in Glare, *Oxford Latin Dictionary*; Talbert, *Senate of Imperial Rome*, 218. See also note 1 to Livius 10.7.9.3 in Livius, *Livy in fourteen volumes*, trans. B.O. Foster, 1st ed., LCL, vol. IV (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1957; reprint, 2).

⁷⁹ Livius 10.7.9.3 and Tacitus, *The Annals*, 4.26 in Tacitus, *The Annals*, trans. John Jackson, 1st ed., LCL, vol. IV (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962; reprint, 3), as well as "Toga" in Glare, *Oxford Latin Dictionary*.

⁸⁰ See "Tunica" in Glare, *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 1990 and Livius 10.7.9.3.

⁸¹ In addition to Stein, see Stevenson, "The Imperial Administration," 186, and Saller, "Status and Patronage" 821. For the *latus clavus* as a mark of senatorial rank, see also Suetonius, *Augustus*, 94.10.1 and *Vespasian*, 2.2.1.

⁸² Ekkehard W. Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann, *Urchristliche Sozialgeschichte: Die Anfänge im Judentum und die Christusgemeinden in der mediterranen Welt* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1995), 92. The proper English terms are found in the English translation from 1999: *The Jesus Movement: A Social History of Its First Century* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 93.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Brent D. Shaw, "Rebels and Outsiders" in *The Cambridge Ancient History: The High Empire, A.D. 70–192*, ed. Alan K. Bowman, Peter Garnsey, and Dominic Rathbone, CAH, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 390.

right to wear a *toga pura*, i.e. a *toga virilis*; a senator would wear a tunica with a *latus clavus* and possibly a *toga candida* if he was a candidate for a magistracy, or the *toga praetexta* if he held a curule magistracy or had held such earlier. He might even have worn a *toga picta*, if he in addition was a triumphant general. A member of the equestrian order would be recognised by his gold ring and his tunic with an *angustus clavus*. He could also wear the *toga candida*, if he was a candidate for political office. Poor persons on the other hand would be recognised by their lack of garments or by their unclean garments. Hence, clothing mattered because through garments rank, status and wealth were on display.

Seating Privileges

Lucius Roscius, tribune of the commons, passed a law reserving the first fourteen rows in the theatre for Roman knights.⁸⁵

He put a stop by special regulations to the disorderly and indiscriminate fashion of viewing the games, through exasperation at the insult to a senator, to whom no one offered a seat in a crowded house at some largely attended games in Puteoli. In consequence of this the senate decreed that, whenever any public show was given anywhere, the first row of seats should be reserved for senators.⁸⁶

The Roscian law of 67 B.C.E. regulated the seating privileges in the theatre for the Roman knights. They had the right to be seated in the front fourteen rows.⁸⁷ The senators were either seated in the first row or in a separate section.⁸⁸ Although this law concerned the theatre only, the practice of separate sections for senators, equestrians and the plebeians also extended to the circus, according to Cassius Dio 60.7.3.4, thus Claudius (41–54 C.E.) made it official that the senators should have their own

⁸⁵ Livius per. 99. Per. 99 is a summary of book 99. However, the actual book 99 has been lost. The summaries and fragments of otherwise lost books of Livius can be found in Livius, *Livy in fourteen volumes: XIV Summaries, Fragments and Obsequens*, trans. Alfred C. Schlesinger, 1st ed., LCL, vol. XIV (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1987; reprint, 2). This specific quotation can be read in Latin on p. 122 and in an English translation on p. 123.

⁸⁶ Suetonius, *Augustus* 44.

⁸⁷ Cicero, *Cicero in Twenty Eight Volumes: Letters to Friends*, trans. D.R. Shackleton Bailey, LCL, vol. XXVII (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001), Letter 415 (X. 32), section 1–2; Tacitus, *The Annals*, 15.32; Suetonius, *Julius Caesar*, 39.2, *Augustus*, 40.1, *Domitian*, 4.5. In addition to these sources, see also Mommsen, *Abriss des Römischen Staatsrechts*, 38; Géza Alföldy, *Römische Sozialgeschichte*, Wissenschaftliche Paperbacks 8: Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte, vol. 8 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiger Verlag, 1975), 108.

⁸⁸ For separate sections, see Suetonius, *Domitian*, 4.5.

section in the circus as well.⁸⁹ A further consolidation of the practice was made by Nero (54–68 C.E.), when he officially gave the knights as well their own section in the circus.⁹⁰

The further back in the theatre as well as the circus one was seated, the lower rank and status one had. Whereas the first rows were reserved for the senators and the equestrians, the slaves stood in the back corridor, the back rows were inhabited by women and gladiators, and the rows in front of them were inhabited by freedmen and poor.⁹¹

These seating arrangements at public events were apparently expanded to semi-official or private events such as banquets. Even though the hosts were supposed to treat their guests as friends and equals, senators and equestrians equally were given better seating, food and wine than other invited guests to the banquets.⁹² It is probable that a Roman senator or equestrian would be given an honourable seat wherever he came, whereas slaves, women, freedmen and poor likewise would be given a less honourable seat. This was the Roman etiquette. Anything else would have been an insult. Thus again we see that seating at official, semi-official and even private occasions represented a display of honour, shame, rank, status and wealth.⁹³

Other signs of rank and also of status than the three above were the *salutatio* ceremonies and the widespread use of inscriptions in honour of individual persons. Let us look further at these two signs of rank.

Salutatio Ceremonies and Inscriptions

The *salutatio* ceremonies were a morning ritual especially significant in Rome, but most likely the ceremonies also spread to other cities of the Empire.⁹⁴ It was a way for clients to show honour to their patrons. The patrons normally belonged to the first two orders, but could also be freedmen who had been able to gain high status through their wealth and benefactions. In rare cases the persons receiving salutations could even

⁸⁹ See also Suetonius, *Claudius*, 21.3.

⁹⁰ Suetonius, *Nero*, 11.1; Tacitus, *The Annals*, 15.32; Plinius, *Natural History*, 8.7.21 (8.21) in Gaius Secundus Plinius, *Natural History. With an English translation in ten volumes*, trans. H. Rackham, 1st ed., LCL, vol. III (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1956; reprint, 2).

⁹¹ Shaw, "Rebels and Outsiders" 389.

⁹² Saller, "Status and Patronage" 830.

⁹³ Shaw, "Rebels and Outsiders" 389.

⁹⁴ Saller, "Status and Patronage" 829.

be women of high status.⁹⁵ The most prominent patron was of course the emperor himself, and when he was in residence in Rome, one of the important obligations of a senator was to appear at the emperor's *salutatio*.⁹⁶ The ritual displayed both rank and status in an again highly visible manner. It was obviously important and took a great deal of time for the clients of persons of high rank and/or status. They would walk around from house to house to greet the person who lived there. This was an important ceremony both for the clients and for the patrons receiving salutations. If a person of high rank and/or status received many clients every morning, it showed the honour, power and influence that this particular person had. For the clients, it was important because their salutation could result in receiving benefactions. The ceremony had its roots in the Republic and was of course at that time politically important as it showed the support one had in society, a support that obviously was important for the person's election. Even though the ritual no longer had as much of a political meaning, it continued in Rome at least through the early and high Empire, and it was probably also imitated outside of Rome.

Yet another way of showing honour was the use of inscriptions in honour of persons.⁹⁷ These could be honorific decrees, which were relatively long and with a specific structure.⁹⁸ They could also be so-called proxeny decrees⁹⁹ or honorific inscriptions.¹⁰⁰ Central to this genre of inscriptions was that they were put up specifically in honour of individual persons. The inscriptions could be either public, i.e. set up by cities, private, i.e. set up by a client in honour of his or her patron, or semi-private, i.e. set up

⁹⁵ Ibid., 831.

⁹⁶ Talbert, *Senate of Imperial Rome*, 68.

⁹⁷ For a brief, yet relevant introduction to honorific decrees, proxeny decrees and honorific inscriptions, see B.H. McLean, *An Introduction to Greek Epigraphy of the Hellenistic and Roman Periods from Alexander the Great down to the Reign of Constantine (323 B.C.–A.D. 337)* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005), 228–244.

⁹⁸ An honorific decree would have a general structure in six parts: 1. *Opening* e.g. with a dating formula, 2. *Motives* which would normally be that the person honoured was a great benefactor, 3. *Hortatory intention* to encourage future benefaction, 4. *Resolution formula* which was normally a citation of the formal motion to honour a person, 5. *Decision* which was the approval of the motion and also often would contain a statement of the honours awarded, e.g. the erection of a statue, and 6. *Conclusion* that could be a curse against anyone who would alter its provisions. See Ibid., 229–232.

⁹⁹ Proxeny decrees were bestowed upon private citizens who had showed hospitality, support, protection and assistance towards foreign visitors, and as such they represented a way of showing these citizens honour. See Ibid., 233.

¹⁰⁰ An honorific inscription was generally shorter than a decree and lacked the formal structure. However, it implied a preceding official decision, and it commended persons who had acted as benefactors or had performed notable public services. See Ibid., 236.

by groups.¹⁰¹ The way of honouring a person who had performed public services would often be by recording a list of a man's offices, status, rank and benefactions.¹⁰² Honorific inscriptions were especially widespread in the Eastern part of the Empire, and the genre also spread to the West.¹⁰³

A SKETCH OF FIRST-CENTURY CIVIC LIFE WITHIN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

The *salutatio* ceremonies were obviously a significant tool for honouring patrons. They were in addition central to Roman civic life, especially in the city of Rome, but probably also in other cities of the Empire. I shall now try to draw a sketch of first-century C.E. civic life within the Roman Empire.

The urban societies of the Roman Empire were complex.¹⁰⁴ They consisted of citizens and non-citizens, of a multitude of ethnic groups, of merchants, artisans, landowners, members of the *ordines*, especially equestrians and senators, of soldiers, freedmen, slaves, the relatively poor and the absolute poor.¹⁰⁵ Among these different groups merchants and urban artisans were often non-citizens, as were freedmen and slaves. The non-citizens to some extent kept their own ethnic and religious traditions through establishing local cults around their native gods and through forming voluntary associations.¹⁰⁶ On the other hand, members of the *ordines*, landowners, and sometimes also merchants and urban artisans, were citizens. Merchants and urban artisans could in other words be found in both groups. What about the poor? They were definitely non-elite, but were they also non-citizens? I believe that both the relatively poor and the absolute poor could, as was the case with urban artisans and merchants,

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 228.

¹⁰² Millar, *The Roman Republic and the Augustan Revolution*, 74. Due to the record of offices, inscriptions are the main sources for individual careers, see Talbert, "Senatorial and Equestrian posts" 324, note 1. A major research study on equestrian careers was done mainly on the basis of inscriptions by Pflaum, see Hans Georg Pflaum, *Les Carrières Procuratoriennes Équestres sous le Haut-Empire Romain* (Paris: 1960).

¹⁰³ Millar, *The Roman Republic and the Augustan Revolution*, 74. There is an excellent website with Greek and Roman inscriptions at <http://epigraphy.packhum.org/inscriptions/> ("Searchable Greek Inscriptions: A Scholarly Tool in Progress", The Packard Humanities Institute <http://epigraphy.packhum.org/inscriptions/> (accessed 09.01.2007 2007).) The website is searchable both by region, language and key words.

¹⁰⁴ Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 13.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

be both citizens and non-citizens. Wealth or lack thereof did not necessarily have anything to do with citizenship. In other words, citizenship was principally a judicial distinction. In a Roman city, at least theoretically, a non-citizen could belong to the elite, if he had somehow gained high status. Likewise a citizen could very well belong to the non-elite.

How was city life in this multitude? I think it may be helpful to make a rough division of focal points for civic life. This is of course a simplification. Main focal points for civic life would be *salutatio ceremonies; politics and government; the imperial cult, theatre, circus, public games and public baths; voluntary associations* and, finally, *the market place*. Some of these could be intertwined. In addition one has to consider the role of the emperor himself. Let me start with this latter institution.

The emperor was represented in the various provinces and cities of the Empire through the imperial offices. Although the holders of these offices to a certain extent had freedom to govern in the way they found suitable, and there were various ways of appointment, it could never be disputed that they were representatives of the emperor. Hence, one way of honouring the emperor would be to honour the holders of imperial offices. To dishonour the representatives of the emperor, on the other hand, would be synonymous with dishonouring the emperor himself. The emperor of the late first century was Domitian, known for his increasing paranoia that led to many persecutions of alleged opponents. The situation of the Empire during the reign of Domitian was probably a situation of fear. To dishonour him could result in being killed, and a very strong possible consequence would be persecutions. Hence, it was even more important for civic life during the reign of Domitian to take part in ceremonies such as the *salutatio*, which would honour representatives of the emperor.

The *salutatio* ceremonies were, as I have already argued, central both for clients and patrons. For a patron they were important in order to show that he was honourable and on a political level to show that he had support. For the clients they were important due to possible benefactions. Political institutions would e.g. be the *boulē* where the debates were held and decisions were made.¹⁰⁷ The imperial cult was centred in the temples which had a central place in any city plan. Other cults were also central depending on the ethnic groups in the city. The theatre, the circus,

¹⁰⁷ David Kennedy, "Syria," in *The Cambridge Ancient History: The Augustan Empire, 43 B.C.–A.D. 69*, ed. Alan K. Bowman, Edward Champlin, and Andrew Lintott, CAH, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 720.

the public games and the public baths were also a very important part of city life, both because enjoyment was important to the Romans, and also because these were places for networking, to use a modern term. These were places where one could, so to speak, show off one's clients, these were places where one could discuss politics, and these were places where one could donate benefactions.

The voluntary associations were also important. According to John S. Kloppenborg there were three main groups of associations in Roman cities: associations linked to a household, associations formed around a common trade, and last, associations formed around the cult of a deity.¹⁰⁸ Voluntary associations were often important also from the perspective of status and of politics. Whether the associations were domestic, professional or cultic, they received benefactions from wealthy members of the city. Such benefactions had the result that members of the associations would honour their patron and thus increase or maintain his or her status in the city. It also had the result that the members of the associations would support their patron should he run for political office.¹⁰⁹ Hence the associations were intertwined with the political life of the cities. Lastly, a focal point for civic life was simply the market place. This was the realm of the merchants and the urban artisans. This is where everybody had to go if they needed something for their livelihood.

Even though the government of the city was performed in the *boulē*, other civic focal points were important as they offered pools of clients, places where one could gather support, and so on. From this one can draw the conclusion that members of the elite, specifically members of the government of the city, could be found in places beneath their status and rank if they were there due to political reasons. Mingling with the plebeians would happen for a reason, mainly for a political reason. It is also a likely conclusion to draw that the absolute poor, persons who had to beg for their living, would gather where people gathered, i.e. at the theatre, the circus, the public games, the public baths, the market place, outside the *boulē*, outside the temples and where voluntary associations gathered.

¹⁰⁸ John S. Kloppenborg, "Collegia and *Thiasoi*: Issues in function, taxonomy and membership" in *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen G. Wilson, (London: Routledge, 1996), 26.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

Social Mobility?

At the elections for tribunes if there were not candidates enough of senatorial rank, he made appointments from among the knights, with the understanding that after their term they might remain in whichever order they wished.¹¹⁰

The picture I have drawn of markers of social affiliation in the first-century Roman Empire and of Roman civic life is of a somewhat closed system, where what mattered was primarily citizenship and rank in society. These factors were important both for the administration of the Empire and possibly for the imperial system as such. Without these clearly different functions and boundaries between them the Empire was in danger of chaos, something that the Republic experienced during the social wars (91–88 B.C.E.). Still, since there was a difference between rank and status, a question about social mobility is relevant. In a society where rank and status were so important, it is likely that whoever held high status without the official high rank would try to gain high rank as well, at least if one had some ambition. This is Keith Hopkins' argument as well, in his article "Élite Mobility in the Roman Empire". He says that upward social mobility appears if there is a discrepancy between high rating on status and low rating on rank according to birth, and social mobility may usefully be understood as status dissonance.¹¹¹ Such discrepancies appear, according to Hopkins, in societies with a high degree of differentiation of institutions such as bureaucracy, army, law and education, because these different institutions represent the possibility of gaining high status according to other criteria than birth. This of course creates status dissonance, which again creates social mobility.¹¹² Such a status dissonance seems to have been the case for the slaves of the imperial household. Some of them would hold a relatively high status due to their wealth and importance to the imperial administration. However, their rank would not be according to their status.¹¹³ P.R.C. Weaver takes up Hopkins' proposition about status dissonance and uses this to explain social mobility among the Imperial freedmen.¹¹⁴ His argument is that the Imperial freedmen automatically would have higher status than other freedmen, due to their connection

¹¹⁰ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 40.1.

¹¹¹ Hopkins, "Elite Mobility in the Roman Empire." This main point of view is argued throughout the article.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 16–19.

¹¹³ See the section above on 'Centres and margins in the Empire'.

¹¹⁴ Weaver, "Social Mobility."

to the *Familia Caesaris*. Thus the status dissonance automatically became greater for this specific group of freedmen. He writes:

Many rose from humble slave status in a junior post in the emperor's service, to freed status with a responsible position in the bureaucracy; and some, because of their ability, which was usually financial, and their legal and often personal relationship to the emperor, reached senior posts from which they exercised great and, in a few cases, undue influence in the Imperial power structure.¹¹⁵

Hopkins further presents a form of social mobility within the Empire that was only loosely connected to status dissonance. It was a mobility "best understood as the product of conflict between the emperor and the aristocracy, and between each of these two and the structurally differentiated institutions".¹¹⁶ This social mobility was a product of political conflict rather than of status dissonance. Hopkins' argument is that the elite exercise of power was a threat to the supremacy of the emperor, hence emperors could and did appoint non-elite persons to positions of power, and in the first century C.E. high administrative positions were held by freedmen.¹¹⁷

There are other examples of social mobility in e.g. Suetonius, Livius and Plinius. According to Suetonius, *Augustus*, 40.1, Augustus nominated equestrians to the senate, and according to Livius 9.46.11–13, Claudius even appointed sons of freedmen to the senate. These two examples show social mobility instigated by the emperor. In Plinius *Natural History* 33.6 one can read that there were slaves that would encircle the iron of their rings with gold. This is an example of possible social mobility by trying to appear as if they had higher status and rank than they actually did. Yet another example of mobility is presented by equestrians who aspired to a senatorial career. The poet Ovid was one of these. He was an *eques* who had higher ambitions than an equestrian career; however, it seems that he lost his enthusiasm.¹¹⁸ That exemplifies an important premise for social mobility, namely ambition or lack of ambition. Without ambition, both personal and on behalf of coming generations, there would most likely be no upward mobility even though there was a discrepancy between status

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 4.

¹¹⁶ Hopkins, "Elite Mobility in the Roman Empire," 15.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 19–24. An example of an ex-slave who held a high administrative position is Felix, the procurator of Judea who judged Paul, see Keith Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves: Sociological Studies in Roman History*, vol. I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 116.

¹¹⁸ Talbert, *Senate of Imperial Rome*, 77.

and rank. The combination of lack of ambition and a status dissonance in a case where a person rated high on birth rank but low on status, however, could equally result in downward social mobility.

Hopkins also understands birth rates among the elite population of the Empire as a factor both for upward and downward mobility.¹¹⁹ It was a factor for upward mobility because elite families simply died out due to low fertility. Three children were regarded as an upper limit, and given the high mortality, even that was below the level of replacement. Hence, there was a need for a different form of replacement of these families, and that made upward mobility possible. Downward mobility was also a possibility, if an elite family actually had three children, which both Augustus and later emperors rewarded, and these three children all grew up. The inheritance system gave both male and female inheritors more or less equal property rights, i.e. a diminution of the children's wealth that very possibly could result in downward mobility.

Though the above presentation of the Roman Empire shows a strictly divided society and a somewhat closed system, where what mattered was rank, there is actual social mobility based on status dissonance and ambition, both personal and on behalf of the next generations. Second, there is social mobility due to the emperor's need to control the two first orders by appointing freedmen or plebeians to official positions, and third, there is social mobility due to birth rates below the level of replacement. Fourth, there is downward social mobility due to split fortunes or lack of ambition.

προσωποληψία in the Empire? Partiality and Social Rank

It seems that the society of the Roman Empire was a society where partiality was a given. It was both the normative and the normal behaviour. Roman etiquette was synonymous with partial treatment according to rank and status. Signs of partiality were many and could be observed on several levels, both non-individual and individual. On a non-individual level, geography mattered. Peoples and nations not included in the Empire were less important than peoples of the Empire. In addition there was a very clear dichotomy between centre and margins within the Empire, between Rome and the rest, between cities and rural areas. On an individual level citizenship mattered. One of the principal distinctions between persons within the Empire was whether one held citizenship or not. Citizenship

¹¹⁹ Hopkins, "Elite Mobility in the Roman Empire," 24–26.

brought privileges that non-citizens did not have. Another principal distinction was whether a person held ownership over him or herself or not, whether he or she was slave or free.

Among the citizens the vast majority were plebeians. The elite consisted of the fourteen patrician clans (mostly senators), the rest of the senatorial order (the first order), the equestrian order (the second order), and possibly some freedmen who had received high status due to wealth and through giving significant benefactions. Roman society had a clear way of distinguishing between different categories of individuals. Citizens were recognised by their *toga pura/toga virilis* and equestrians by their gold ring, the *angustus clavus* on their tunics and, if candidates for office, by their *toga candida*. Senators were recognised by the *latus clavus* on their tunics and the wearing of either a *toga candida*, a *toga praetexta* or a *toga picta*. In addition the senators and equestrians had special seating privileges at the theatre, the circus, probably the public games, and possibly at the banquets. The poor, on the other hand, were recognised by their lack of or dirty clothing and they were seated in the far back of the theatre. These differences in rank invited both partiality and usurpation.¹²⁰ At the privileged end of this partiality and usurpation, we find the emperor and the first two orders. At the unprivileged end, we find plebeians, non-citizens, slaves, women and the poor.

The visible signs of rank described above all served to educate the inhabitants of the Roman Empire, both citizens and non-citizens, elite and non-elite. The signs indicated that different persons had different value and that some had a higher value than others, and hence should be honoured. Visible ways of honouring would be both the *salutatio* ceremonies and inscriptions. One of the most visible signs of inequalities were the seating arrangements at the theatre, and gradually also at the circus. The very visibility of seating arrangements served, 1) to educate the people in regards to social stratification and 2) to teach the people to treat certain members of the Empire better than others.¹²¹ Roman etiquette was an etiquette of differential treatment according to rank and position in society.

Hence προσωποληψία (partiality) was a natural part of the society of the Roman Empire.

¹²⁰ Saller, "Status and Patronage" 822.

¹²¹ See Ibid., 819, 820–821; Shaw, "Rebels and Outsiders," 389.: "Theatrical space was perhaps the best venue where the hierarchical order of values could be made manifest, controlled not just by the norms of social pressure, but also by the fiat of law."

CHAPTER FOUR

EXEGESIS OF JAMES 2:1–13

TEXTUAL BASIS AND TRANSLATION

The Textual Basis of the Epistle of James—General Considerations

Based on a thorough textual criticism of Jas 2:1–13 that I did as part of my PhD, I have found no reason to alter NA²⁷'s critically reconstructed text. However, I shall in this context reflect briefly upon the textual witnesses we have for the Epistle of James, and in addition reflect briefly on possible text critical problems. These witnesses consist of papyri, uncials and minuscule manuscripts. Let me make some general reflections about the papyri, and uncial witnesses.¹

Papyri and Uncials

p 20, 23, 54, 74 and 100 are the papyri witnesses for the Epistle.² p 20 includes chapters two and three incompletely preserved. p 23 contains chapter 1 incompletely preserved. p 54 includes chapters two and three incompletely preserved, whereas p 74 includes all five chapters of the Epistle of James, but incompletely preserved. p 100 contains Jas. 3:13–4:4 and 4:9–5:1.³ Among these papyri, Jas 2:1–13 is found in p 74. p 74 is dated to the sixth or seventh century. Even though it is relatively young, it is considered to be a category I witness in the classifying system of Kurt and Barbara Aland.⁴ It differs from the critical text of the NA²⁷ in several

¹ For a more thorough overview of the textual basis of the Epistle of James, see e.g. Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 85–91; Mussner, *Der Jakobusbrief*, 53–56.

² Kurt Aland, *Das Neue Testament auf Papyrus: I. Die Katholischen Briefe*, ANTF, vol. 6 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986), VI.

³ Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism*, trans. Erroll F. Rhodes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), Chart 5 'The textual contents of New Testament papyri' (Endpaper).

⁴ Category I witnesses are "[M]anuscripts of a very special quality which should always be considered in establishing the original text", *Ibid.*, 105. The categorisation shows how weighty a manuscript is. Category I is more weighty than category II. For a more precise evaluation of categories, see Aland and Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, 105f.

instances: 1:9, 19, 23, 25, 27; 2:3, 6(2x), 7, 11(2x), 12, 18(2x), 20; 3:5, 11, 17; 4:3, 12(2x), 14; 5:3, 8, 19, 20(2x). Out of these we observe that 7 instances are from the textual unit of Jas 2:1–13.

The most important uncials for the Epistle of James are $\aleph$, A, B, C, K, L, P, Ψ , 048, 049, 056, 0142, 0166, 0173 and 0246.

Possible Text Critical Problems

Although p 74 differs from NA²⁷'s critically reconstructed text of Jas 2:1–13 in seven instances, there is, based on internal and external evidence, no reason to alter NA²⁷'s critically reconstructed text. In a more thorough text critical study, there could in my opinion, be reasons to discuss two of the text critical problems due to their exegetical relevance. The two problems are the one concerning the word order in v. 1, and the first text critical problem of v. 5.

When it comes to the word order of the last part of Jas 2:1, the text of NA²⁷ reads τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῆς δόξης. There are debates among scholars on how to understand this genitive construction and the two alternatives in the critical apparatus of NA²⁷ should also be understood as initiatives to simplify the genitive construction. The text of the NA²⁷ is so strongly witnessed on this point, that there is no need to argue extensively in favour of its originality.⁵

The second possible text critical problem of Jas 2:1–13, concerns the dative τῷ κόσμῳ in Jas 2:5. There are three alternative readings to the NA²⁷, in which only one uses the dative, whereas the two others use the genitive. Whether one uses the dative or the genitive, of course, could have exegetical implications. However, both from the perspective of internal and external evidence I hold that NA²⁷ represents the more difficult reading and therefore the more probable reading.

⁵ There is only a negative critical apparatus to the problem at hand in NA²⁷.

*Translation**James 2:1–13*

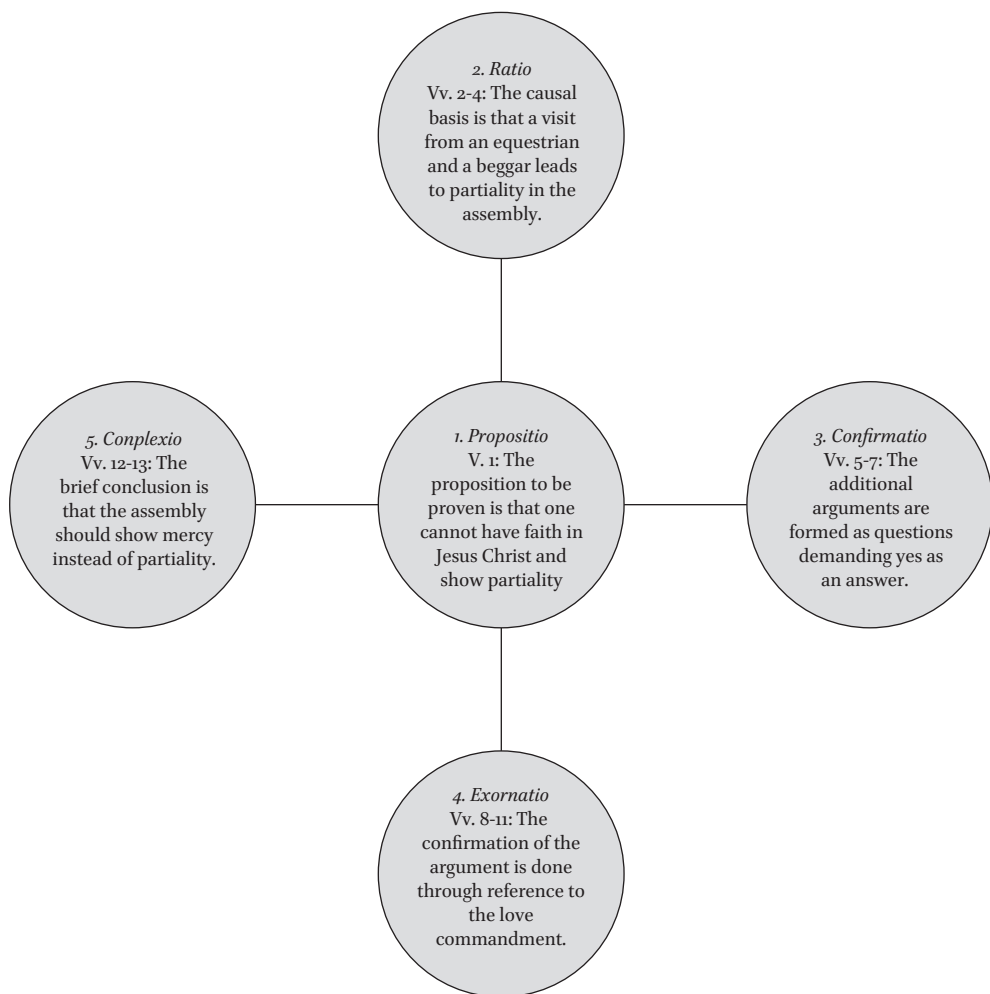
¹ My brothers and sisters, you cannot have faith in our Lord, the glorious Jesus Christ, and show partiality. ² For if a man with a gold ring and in bright clothing,⁶ and also a beggar in filthy clothing should happen to enter your assembly, ³ and you look at the one who is wearing the bright clothes with favour and tell him, “You may sit here, on an honourable seat”, whereas you tell the beggar, “You may stand there, or sit under my footstool”, ⁴ have you not then wavered among yourselves and become evil-thinking judges? ⁵ Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters! Has not God chosen the absolute poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? ⁶ But you have dishonoured the beggar. Is it not the rich who oppress you, and are they not the ones who pull you into the courts of justice? ⁷ Is it not they who revile the good name that has been invoked over you?

⁸ If however, you fulfil, according to the scripture, the royal Law, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself”, you do well. ⁹ But if on the other hand you show partiality, you commit a sin and thus will be condemned by the Law as transgressors. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole Law, but in one [point] fails, he has become liable of [it] all. ¹¹ For the one who said, “You shall not commit adultery”, he also said, “You shall not murder”. But if you do not commit adultery, but you murder, you have become a transgressor of the Law. ¹² Thus speak and so act as those who are about to be judged by the Law of liberty. ¹³ For the judgement is merciless towards him who did not show mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgement.

Structure of the Exegetical Analysis of James 2:1–13

The exegesis of Jas 2:1–13 shall follow the structure of Jas 2:1–13 presented in the section ‘Jas 2:1–13 in its Jamesian context’ in chapter two. V. 1 is the *propositio*, vv. 2–4 the *ratio*, vv. 5–7 the *confirmatio*, vv. 8–11 the *exornatio* and vv. 12–13 the *complexio*. Figuratively this can be seen as follows:

⁶ The technical term in Latin is *toga candida*.



VERSE 1—PROPOSITIO

¹ Ἀδελφοί μου, μὴ ἐν προσωπολημψίαις ἔχετε τὴν πίστιν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῆς δόξης.

¹ My brothers and sisters, you cannot have faith in our Lord, the glorious Jesus Christ, and show partiality.

Inner Texture

As a *propositio* one might consider a slight rephrasing of the verse: *Partiality is inconsistent with faith in Jesus Christ*.⁷ This is the proposition that the author intends to prove, this is the argumentative basis for the rest of the textual unit of Jas 2:1–13. The *propositio* takes the form of an admonition or even a direct warning to the Christian assembly. The admonition of the *propositio* is the starting point from which the rest of the textual unit is centred, and from an inner textual perspective it seems quite clear that the admonition is given due to a malpractice within the community. What specifically the partiality consists of, is not yet clear.

*Intertexture of Sibling Terminology*⁸

V. 1 starts by addressing the recipients of this admonition with the address ἀδελφοί μου. Later in the pericope the author of James addresses them as ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί (v. 5), and even later in chapter two (v. 14) he repeats ἀδελφοί μου. It seems that in chapter two the author uses this address whenever he is starting something new, or when what he is going to say is particularly important. The address has a very strong relational aspect. It also gives the reader a hint as to whether this is a Christian assembly or not. The specific Christian use of ἀδελφοί, i.e. used about fellow Christians, may have its traditional background from the Jesus tradition as seen in Mark 3:31–35 with parallels in Matt 12:46–50 and Luke 8:19–21.⁹ This is the first instance where Jesus defines his family as “Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother” (Mark 3:35). However, sibling terminology was common in Classical Antiquity, as I shall show later, and this is probably a more prominent background for the use in the Epistle of James.

A second prominent textual unit central to the understanding of the address here in James 2, is Matt 23:1–12. This textual unit is central due to its explanation of the family concept within Christianity: “And call no

⁷ Watson, “James 2 in Light of Greco-Roman Schemes of Argumentation,” 102.

⁸ My translation of the address ἀδελφοί μου is as has already become evident, gender inclusive. Since the expression is used as an address to Christian assemblies with members of both genders as is shown by the use of ἀδελφή in Jas 2:15, I find this to be an accurate translation of the address in Jas 2:1.

⁹ According to Moo, sibling terminology was used to describe fellow members of the same religion both by Jews and pagans, see Moo, *The Letter of James*, 53.

one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven” (v. 9), but also because it links this concept to a practice of ‘brotherly equality’ that reminds us of ‘non-partiality’. The Christians are here contrasted with the scribes and the Pharisees to whom places of honour at feasts and in the synagogue as well as salutations in the market place are important. The Christians however should have one focal point: Christ. This makes them all ‘brethren’ with the same Father in heaven. By being a Christian one becomes part of an extended family, and thus the relational aspect is central and makes partiality, search for honour, and so on, irrelevant and wrong.

In Acts the development is that ἀδελφοί¹⁰ is widely used as an address both towards the Christian community and towards the Jewish community, but also as a general term for a Christian or the Christian community.¹¹ The use of ἀδελφοί in Romans is quite similar to the use in Acts. The only difference as far as I can see is that the term is exclusively used about the Christians, either as an address or as a general term.¹² Sometimes it is even hard to distinguish between these two uses by Paul in Romans. In the rest of the Pauline Epistles (instances of ἀδελφοί are found in 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1–2 Thessalonians)¹³ the use of the term is quite similar. In Philippians ἀδελφοί used as an address seems more prominent. In 1 Thessalonians the term is used extraordinarily often, 14 times in five chapters. We should however pay extra attention to 1 Cor 15:58 as Paul here is using the same term as in James 2, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί. It is clear through this use in 1 Corinthians that Paul also emphasises brotherly love. The term ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί shows a very strong love bond between the author and the addressees. They are not indifferent towards each other. In the Pastoral Epistles the only occurrences are in 1 Tim 6:2 and 2 Tim 4:21,

¹⁰ My searches for ἀδελφοί have been limited to the masculine Nominative and Vocative plural. Only regarding the Catholic Epistles have I also searched for the feminine and masculine Nominative singular. I have done this due to a need for limitation of the material, and this limitation seemed relevant as the Nominative and Vocative plural are representative of the ideological texture of the word—i.e. the meaning of the word.

¹¹ Ἀδελφοί as a specific Christian address is found e.g. in Acts 1:15–16; 6:3; 15:7, 13, 23. It is also interesting that ἀδελφοί is used as an address towards the Jewish community, notably by Paul, see Acts 13:26, 38; 23:1, 5, 6, and that Paul and Barnabas are addressed as ἀδελφοί by ‘the rulers of the synagogue’ in Acts 13:15. This might indicate that there was a Jewish parallel use of the term. As a general term used about the Christians, we find ἀδελφοί in Acts 9:30; 11:1, 12; 17:10, 14; 18:27; 21:17 and 28:15.

¹² As a general term for the Christians, see Rom 1:13; 7:1, 4; 8:12; 11:25; 15:14. As an address, see Rom 10:1; 12:1; 15:30; 16:17.

¹³ There is a debate about the authorship of 2 Thessalonians, see Kümmel, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 228–232.

and the word is used as a general term for the Christians. Hebrews introduces a new perspective, namely ἀδελφοί ἅγιοι (Heb 3:1). Otherwise the use is similar to both Paul's Epistles, 2 Thessalonians, and 1–2 Timothy.

Compared to the other Catholic Epistles, James uses sibling terminology considerably more often. In James as a whole, there are several occurrences of the term ἀδελφοί (4:11; 5:7, 9, 10), ἀδελφοί μου (1:2; 2:1, 14; 3:1, 10, 12; 5:12, 19) or ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί (1:16, 19; 2:5). Occurrences of the plural ἀδελφοί alone in the other Catholic Epistles are rare. The term is only found in 2 Pet 1:10 and 1 John 3:13. The singular ἀδελφός alone is found in Jas 1:9; 2:15; 2 Pet 3:15 and Jude 1. In 2 Pet 3:15 it is used about Paul: ὁ ἀγαπητός ἡμῶν ἀδελφός Παῦλος, and in Jude 1 it might actually be used not as a designation of a Christian brother but of a biological brother; Jude is there said to be the brother of James. The only occurrences of the feminine ἀδελφή in the Catholic Epistles are in Jas 2:15 and 2 John 13. The term ἀγαπητοί, on the other hand, is used far more often in the other Catholic Epistles than in James. One may ask whether they are parallel terms. In James ἀγαπητοί is always used together with ἀδελφοί in the expression ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί.¹⁴ In the rest of the Catholic Epistles, however, we find that ἀγαπητοί is used alone as an address.¹⁵ 2 Pet 3, 1 John 4 and Jude are significant texts in this context, as they embed 10 out of 15 occurrences. Ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί and ἀγαπητοί can also be understood as parallel terms. Hence it is relevant to look at the use of ἀδελφοί and ἀγαπητοί in the Catholic Epistles as a whole to reach a better understanding of the use in James. 1 John 3 is particularly interesting in this context, as the chapter seems to combine τέκνα θεοῦ, ἀδελφοί and ἀγαπητοί. The three are apparently parallel terms: as Christians we are children of God, brethren and thus can be called beloved. The combination of τέκνα θεοῦ and ἀγαπητοί is continued in 1 John 4, though ἀδελφοί is not mentioned there. The use of ἀγαπητοί in the Catholic Epistles is a very strong indication of the bond of love between the authors of the Epistles and the recipients, and further, it is a strong indication of a love bond between the Christians in general. Thus the extensive use of ἀδελφοί in James is just as strong a sign of a love bond between James and his addressees as is the use of ἀγαπητοί in the rest of the Catholic Epistles.

¹⁴ The term ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί does seem to have something to do with the concept of φιλαδελφία, sibling love. Semantically of course ἀδελφός and φιλαδελφία are related. In addition 'beloved brothers' and 'sibling love' are related conceptually.

¹⁵ 1 Pet 2:11; 4:12; 2 Pet 3:18, 14, 17; 1 John 2:7; 3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, 11; Jude 3, 17, 20.

Reidar Aasgaard has made some interesting observations concerning the use of ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί in his study *My beloved Brothers and Sisters! Christian Siblingship in Paul*.¹⁶ In a second and shorter study, Aasgaard examines the sibling language not only in Paul but in the New Testament as such against the background of Classical Antiquity.¹⁷ The following elements are, according to Aasgaard, particularly significant:¹⁸

- 1) Siblingship was a very important social relationship.
- 2) It was associated with love.
- 3) The emotions involved in this relationship were accorded great importance.
- 4) Harmony among siblings was regarded as an ideal.
- 5) Siblingship did not denote equality, but rather unity, despite differences of gender and status.
- 6) Siblings ought to support one another; for example, the strong should support the weak.
- 7) Siblingship could also entail conflict, especially in questions about inheritance.
- 8) In order to avoid conflicts, siblings should avoid judging one another.
- 9) In order to overcome conflicts, siblings should forgive one another.
- 10) Siblings should take care of the family's honour *ad extra*, e.g. by being self-supporting.

Above all, the sibling relation was associated with love.¹⁹ This background from Classical Antiquity also shows that siblingship was very important, and by addressing someone as a brother or sister one showed affection and a close relationship. Aasgaard's second and eighth points are directly relevant to Jas 2:1–13, as the author addresses his recipients "my beloved

¹⁶ Reidar Aasgaard, *My Beloved Brothers and Sisters! Christian Siblingship in Paul*, Early Christianity in Context, Published under JSNTSup, vol. 265 (London: T&T Clark, 2004). Aasgaard has two really helpful appendixes where he gives an overview of sibling terminology in the authentic Pauline letters and in the other letters/epistles. See appendixes 1 and 2.

¹⁷ See Reidar Aasgaard, "Brothers and Sisters in the Faith: Christian Siblingship as an Ecclesiological Mirror in the First Two Centuries" in *The Formation of the Early Church*, ed. Jostein Ådna, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005). This article does not only focus on Paul, but finds trajectories on Christian siblingship throughout the New Testament and the patristic literature. The article is therefore quite relevant also for an interpretation of the Epistle of James.

¹⁸ Ibid., 288f.

¹⁹ Aasgaard, *My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!*, 308.

brothers and sisters”, and as acts of partiality result in the assembly becoming evil-thinking judges (Jas 2:4). The latter should be avoided both according to Classical Antiquity and according to the author of James and his understanding of the Christian message. According to Aasgaard, James is in his use of sibling terminology “concerned about the differences between weak and strong siblings”.²⁰

One may ask whether the use of sibling terminology is structurally significant in James. On a superficial level it is easy to observe that the author uses ἀδελφοί (4:11; 5:7, 9, 10), ἀδελφοί μου (1:2; 2:1, 14; 3:1, 10, 12; 5:12, 19) and ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί (1:16, 19; 2:5) extensively. The repeated use of sibling terminology in all chapters of the Epistle of James at the very least represents an incentive to read on. The constant address to the readers serves to keep their attention. However, it is worth looking into whether the sibling terminology is structurally important beyond this.²¹ In chapter two I presented a structure of the Epistle of James drawn from Ernst Baasland’s article in *ANRW*.²² He proposes the following structure for the Epistle of James: *exordium* (1:2–15), *transitus* (1:16–18), *propositio* (1:19–27), *argumentatio* (2:1–5:6) and *peroratio* (5:7–20). The *argumentatio* is further divided in three: *confirmatio* (2:1–3:10a), *transitus* (3:10b–12) and *confutatio* (3:13–5:6).

Baasland also combines this structure with a thematic structure of the Epistle of James in the *ANRW* article:²³

1:1–18	1:19–27	2:1–13; 2:14–26; 3:1–12	3:13–4:6	4:7–10; 4:11–5:6	5:7–20
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By comparing the use of sibling terminology to this structure I get the following result: Sibling terminology is used in the beginning of every unit except 3:13–4:6 and 4:7–10. Let me show this more specifically: ἀδελφοί μου

²⁰ Aasgaard, “Brothers and Sisters in the Faith,” 306.

²¹ Moo seems to be of the opinion that it is, see Moo, *The Letter of James*, 100.

²² Baasland, “Literarische Form, Thematik und geschichtliche Einordnung des Jakobusbriefes”.

²³ See note 64 in *Ibid.*, 3659. Baasland’s rhetorical term is: *Proömium* (1:2–18), where 1:16–18 is *transitus*. Baasland understands the *Proömium* as a *praeparatio* for the following. The following is the *propositio* (1:19–27), *confirmatio*-part (2:1–3:12), *confutatio*-part (3:13–5:6) and *peroratio* (5:7–20).

is used in 1:2, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί in 1:19, ἀδελφοί μου in 2:1, 2:14 and 3:1; in addition it is used in 3:12 and thus provides an inclusion structure for 2:1–3:12 in addition to 3:1–12. There is no sibling terminology in 3:13–4:6, nor in 4:7–10. However, ἀδελφοί is used in 4:11 and in 5:7 and in addition ἀδελφοί μου is used towards the end of the unit 5:7–20 in verse 19. Thus seven out of nine textual units identified by Baasland start with sibling terminology, and two out of nine also end with sibling terminology. Hence sibling terminology is structurally important in James.

To conclude, the sibling terminology in James indicates a strong bond of love between James and his addressees.²⁴ As in the rest of the New Testament, sibling terminology has its background in Classical Antiquity and as such indicates an important social relationship associated with love. Harmony was an ideal and siblings should not judge one another. Instead they should support one another. The author's use of sibling terminology thus serves to sharpen the admonition, as partiality in the assembly would indicate lack of harmony, judging amongst the assembly and lack of mutual support. James is not indifferent towards his addressees. His admonition is due to his love towards them. This is shown through his constant use of sibling terminology. On a structural level the sibling terminology is also important. Almost all of Baasland's nine textual units are introduced by sibling terminology.

The next sentence in Jas 2:1 represents a grammatical enigma:

Μὴ ἐν προσωπολημψίαις ἔχετε τὴν πίστιν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῆς δόξης.

You cannot have faith in our Lord, the glorious Jesus Christ, and show partiality.

A brief analysis of the sentence shows that the predicate is a negated imperative plural; Μὴ . . . ἔχετε, have not. The object is τὴν πίστιν, which gives the possible translation “Have not faith” or “You cannot have faith”. The prepositional phrase, ἐν προσωπολημψίαις, qualifies the predicate: “You cannot have—in the state of partialities (pl.)—faith”. In my translation of this sentence, I have translated the prepositional phrase with predicate + object: “You cannot have faith in . . ., and show partiality.” This construct is not there in the original Greek, however, it is better in English than a more grammatically correct translation.

²⁴ In agreement with Mussner, see Mussner, *Der Jakobusbrief*, 115.

The grammatical enigma however, is how to relate the object of the sentence, τὴν πίστιν, to the genitive construction and how to understand τῆς δόξης in relation to the rest of the genitive construction. Before I look further at this problem, I shall look at the intertexture, interpretation and cultural intertexture of προσωποληψία, partiality, and after that I shall focus on the genitive construction.

The Intertexture of προσωποληψία

As a noun προσωποληψία is found in Rom 2:11; Eph 6:9 and Col 3:25. In Acts 10:34 the cognate προσωπολήμπτης is found, and in 1 Pet 1:17 the adverb ἀπροσωπολήμπτως is found. The verb, προσωπολημπτέω, is found in Jas 2:9. The linguistic background for the term is probably from the LXX λαμβάνειν πρόσωπον, to lift up the face, or to pay attention to a person.²⁵ This indicates the act of directing attention towards one person to the disadvantage of another.²⁶ Rom 2:11 states that God shows no partiality between Jews and Gentiles. Eph 6:9 argues the same main point, that God shows no partiality. The parties are in this text slaves and masters and God shows no partiality between them. This is of course a clear difference between God and Roman society, in which partiality between masters and slaves was considered a matter of course. One of the primary distinctions between persons in the Roman Empire was whether they were slaves or free, and of course favouritism was practised on the basis of rank.²⁷ In Col 3:25 there is also principally talk about the lack of partiality shown by God. In this case, however, it is argued that God is impartial in his judgement: “For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.” The cognate προσωπολήμπτης in Acts 10:34 basically shows the same argument as in Rom 2:11: God shows no partiality between Jews and Gentiles. 1 Pet 1:17 argues the same as Col 3:25: God is impartial in his

²⁵ See e.g. Sir 4:22; 35:13; 1 Esd 4:39; Luke 20:21. The Hebrew term is פָּנִים נָשָׂא—see the paragraph on πρόσωπον in Frederick William Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 887f. According to Moo, the word προσωποληψία seems to be invented by New Testament writers, see Moo, *The Letter of James*, 102, in agreement with Maynard-Reid, see Maynard-Reid, *Poverty and Wealth in James*, 49. Laws also mentions that this might be among the earliest Christian words, see Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 94.

²⁶ Mussner has interpreted the use of προσωποληψία and προσωπολημπτέω in James not to mean partiality or partial acts, but rather to mean personality cult (*Personenkult*), see Mussner, *Der Jakobusbrief*, 115f.

²⁷ See the section ‘A sketch of first-century civic life within the Roman Empire’ above.

judgement. From these rare occurrences of the word *προσωποληψία*, its cognate *προσωπολήπτως* and the adverb *ἀπροσωπολήπτως* in the New Testament, we see that Jas 2:1 and 2:9 are the only instances in the New Testament of partiality between humans.²⁸

From this one can argue that the basic notion in James is that since God shows no partiality between Jews and Gentiles, or between masters and slaves, neither can believers in Christ show partiality. Since God is impartial in his judgement, believers in Christ cannot show partiality. The reference in Ephesians might be particularly central vis-à-vis James 2, as the master-slave situation in Ephesians 6 can be understood as similar to the situation in James 2, with a Roman official and a beggar. Another central background text for this idea in James must surely be Gal 3:28. Although the word *προσωποληψία* is not used in that text, the general idea is that as believers in Christ everybody is equal: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” Again it shows that partiality is irreconcilable with Christian faith.

In addition to this perspective on partiality, Luke Timothy Johnson argues that the phrase *προσωποληψία* in James “suggests not simply a general attitude but specific and repeated acts”.²⁹ The plural in Jas 2:1 is from my point of view and indication for this.

The Cultural Texture of προσωποληψία

It is relevant to ask what a Christian community, consisting of both Jewish and Gentile members, in the first-century Roman Empire could have associated with *προσωποληψία*. First of all the community would most likely know—or at least they were supposed to know—Jesus’ teaching about loving one’s neighbour, which the author of James refers to in Jas 2:8. Even though this point is not explicit until later verses, there should be an automatic Jewish-Christian ‘neighbour-love-reflex’. Second, one would imagine that there would be an immediate association to biblical texts such as Lev 19:15; Deut 1:16–17; 16:18–20, and others,³⁰ concerning impartial judges and impartial judgement.³¹ Given that this Christian community lived in

²⁸ Johnson, *The Letter of James*, 221.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ E.g. Exod 23:6–8; Ps 58:2–3; Prov 8:16; 24:23–29; 31:9; Isa 11:4–5; Jer 21:12; Zech 7:9–10.

³¹ See Roy Bowen Ward, “Partiality in the Assembly: James 2:2–4,” *HTR* 62 (1969), who refers to rabbinical teaching on partiality, or rather impartiality, in judicial proceedings.

a Roman city, in a Roman cultural context, and possibly as Romans themselves, their Roman etiquette might have been contradictory to some of their Jewish-Christian background.

First of all there would be, though maybe not expressed explicitly, a question about neighbourly love: which neighbours would it be relevant to show affection? Would it help you in any way to show affection towards a beggar? It probably would not hurt you, but the ones you were supposed to honour were the ones that everybody honoured, the people of high status and rank, i.e. the rich, equestrians, senators and the emperor himself. These were the patrons that were honoured in *salutatio* ceremonies every morning. These were the individuals that were given honourable seats in the theatre, the circus, at the games, and wherever else they turned up. In the provinces and cities outside of Rome one would normally not be able to honour the emperor himself, but one could honour him through his representatives, i.e. the persons who held political offices within the imperial administration.

Second, there is the question of the Law. Though just judgement was probably as important for the Romans as for other inhabitants of the Empire, there is the issue of citizenship, status and rank. Different laws were for different persons. Hence, a Roman judicial etiquette when confronted with two litigants, one second in rank and a candidate for political office, one a beggar with no rank or status whatsoever, perhaps not even a citizen, would be an etiquette of differential treatment, according to rank.

Would all this in a Roman cultural context be called *προσωποληψία*? Probably not. It was simply a matter of giving honour to whom honour should be given according to the Roman cultural etiquette.³² On the other hand, would this be called *προσωποληψία* in a Jewish-Christian cultural context? Probably. The addressees of the Epistle of James should know that when confronted with *προσωποληψία*, these matters would be relevant. Thus the text of James 2 shows us a cultural context where there is a conflict between the Jewish-Christian teaching and the Roman cultural etiquette according to which everybody lived. This conflict makes James' admonition in the *propositio* of this text a proper and relevant admonition.³³

³² A similar thought may be seen in Paul in Rom 13:7: "Pay to all what is due to them—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honour to whom honour is due."

³³ Douglas J. Moo is of the opinion that "the space that James devotes to this matter in his letter suggests that discrimination was a problem among his readers". See Moo, *The*

Ideological Texture of προσωποληψία

The issue of προσωποληψία illuminates binaries that are relevant for a postcolonial optic on Jas 2. First of all there is the binary of coloniser—colonised, which as we have seen in the section above, is fundamental to the interpretation of προσωποληψία. Is differential treatment a problem at all? From the perspective of the coloniser the προσωποληψία would not be a problem but the standard cultural etiquette. It was simply a way of showing honour. However, the perspective of the colonised may have been somewhat different. The προσωποληψία would be the everyday expression of imperial oppression.

The binary coloniser—colonised lead us over to the binary power—powerless. It is obvious that the power lay with the coloniser, i.e. the Romans. If we put Roman cultural etiquette up against Jewish-Christian faith on the issue of differential treatment, it is clear that the power to define etiquette in the Roman Empire also concerning προσωποληψία lay with the coloniser. Up against this, the believers in the Jewish-Christian faith were powerless. Now, what does the author of the Epistle of James do? He actually tries to shift the power when it comes to this issue. He draws the attention towards their faith in Jesus and consequently towards Jesus' teaching about equality. From a postcolonial perspective, we can conclude that he tries to change the binary power—powerless by drawing the attention of the believers towards the centre of their faith, Jesus Christ. Their faith should have defining power over their actions, not the Romans.

The centre of the Empire was the city of Rome with the emperor, the senate and the people. This was both a geographical and an ideological centre. The margin was everything else; geographically, ideologically, culturally and religiously. When the author of the Epistle of James tries to change the binary power—powerless, he also tries to change the binary centre—margin. It is not even subtle. He argues openly that for the Christians the centre cannot be Rome, but should be their own faith. This faith has consequences for how they live their lives in the Roman Empire. Their faith must have consequences when it comes to how they treat the other.

Letter of James, 99. I agree with him and would like to add that the conflict between religious and cultural etiquette that Christian assemblies inevitably would experience might have been a reason for this recurring problem of discrimination or partiality.

The Inner Texture of πίστις τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῆς δόξης

Let me look at the grammatical enigma of the genitive construction in v. 1:

Πίστις τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῆς δόξης

First, there is a question regarding the relation between πίστις and the genitive construction. Is this a subjective genitive (faith *of* our Lord Jesus Christ) or an objective genitive (faith *in* our Lord Jesus Christ)?³⁴ According to Wallace, the genitive in Jas 2:1 is an objective personal genitive, and I agree with him.³⁵ It is the addressees' faith *in* Jesus Christ that is in conflict with their acts of partiality. Second, there is the challenge of how τῆς δόξης should be understood in the genitive construction. According to Dibelius, there are three main interpretations of the genitive construction.³⁶ The question remains whether the genitive τῆς δόξης a) is connected with πίστις³⁷ or b) with the whole expression τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ which according to Dibelius would link τῆς δόξης more strongly to τοῦ κυρίου,³⁸ or c) whether τῆς δόξης should be read as a qualitative genitive to the proper name Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.³⁹ Alternative b) gives this possible translation: "you cannot have faith in our Lord of glory, Jesus Christ". The qualitative genitive of alternative c) would give this possible translation: "you cannot have faith in our Lord Jesus Christ in his glory", or "you cannot have faith in our Lord, the glorious Jesus Christ". This is the alternative

³⁴ See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 114f.

³⁵ Ibid., 116. In disagreement with Hartin and Wachob who both interpret this as a subjective genitive, see Hartin, *James*, 117. and Wachob, *The voice of Jesus in the social rhetoric of James*, 65.

³⁶ Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 159f.

³⁷ This alternative seems to have as a premise that the word order of the genitive construction is changed according to the first alternative reading in the critical apparatus of NA²⁷. In my opinion this alternative reading is too weakly witnessed and should therefore not be considered. Hence, I shall not consider this first alternative among the possible understandings presented by Dibelius.

³⁸ Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 160.

³⁹ See Ibid. Bo Reicke, on the other hand, understands τῆς δόξης as a qualitative genitive to 'faith' rather than to 'Jesus Christ' mainly because 'Lord' is already determined by 'our', see Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, 65, note 13. Although Reicke does not explicitly say so, it seems that a premise for understanding τῆς δόξης as a qualitative genitive to 'faith' is to change the word order of the genitive construction. Reicke's translation is "the glorious faith in our Lord Jesus Christ", see Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, 26.

preferred by Dibelius,⁴⁰ and from the word order it also looks like the most likely solution to the grammatical problem.

Laws, on the other hand introduces a further alternative in reading τῆς δόξης as an apposition. She says, “The whole phrase is syntactically extremely awkward, being a sting of genitives of which the last, *tes doxes*, reads like an appendage without any clear connection with what precedes it.”⁴¹ She translates the phrase as “the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the glory”.⁴² Laws is of the opinion that this translation is the best given the structure of the verse, but “the question would remain of what it means to describe Christ as the glory”.⁴³ Her answer to this question is that in the LXX δόξα is the Greek translation of the Hebrew כבוד, which is found in theophanies, meaning the splendour and light that is both a sign of the presence of God and an effect of it.⁴⁴ “So when James calls Jesus *the glory*, he may be seen to reflect this understanding of Jesus as ‘theophany’; a manifestation of the presence of God.”⁴⁵ Laws’ understanding of τῆς δόξης as an apposition and her understanding of an identification of Jesus as ἡ δόξα is rather astounding. First, one would imagine that if Jesus is identified as ἡ δόξα in James, he would be identified in similar fashion in the New Testament Christophanies in e.g. 2 Cor 4:4–6, and in hymns as in e.g. John 1:14 and Col 1:11. However, in the New Testament Jesus *is* not the glory, but he *has* the glory of God. Second, this seems to be the relevant understanding of the Old Testament theophanies as well. God *is* not the glory, he shows himself *through* the glory. Although Laws says that כבוד is a *sign* of God’s presence, she still draws the conclusion that Jesus *is* the glory. I find this somewhat inconsistent and not in accord with the biblical text. My conclusion is that, in agreement with Dibelius, τῆς δόξης should be understood as a qualitative genitive to Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

⁴⁰ Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 160. It is also preferred by Mussner, see Mussner, *Der Jakobusbrief*, 116.

⁴¹ Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 94.

⁴² Gerhard Kittel, “δοκέω κτλ.” in *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, vol. II, 232–237 and 242–255, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 243.

⁴³ Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 95.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 95f. The examples of theophanies that Laws gives are Exod 16:10; 2 Chr 7:1–3; Ezek 8:4; 11:23 and Isa 6:1. The use of δόξα in the New Testament is based on the LXX use of the word. They are both very different from the extra-biblical Greek usage. In extra-biblical Greek the basic meaning of δόξα is ‘opinion’, see Kittel, “δοκέω κτλ.” in, 233.

⁴⁵ Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 97.

The Intertexture of δόξα

Δόξα in the New Testament has its background in the LXX which again is a translation from the Hebrew כבוד. Basic meanings of δόξα in the LXX are parallel to the basic meanings of כבוד in the Hebrew Bible, namely ‘glory or honour ascribed to someone’, ‘power’, ‘splendour’, ‘human glory’.⁴⁶ However,

the primary meaning of the LXX word [...] does not emerge except with reference to God. In this sense, of course, it may simply refer to ‘God’s honour’ or ‘power,’ like כבוד. But to isolate individual senses can only be a help to understanding. In reality, the term always speaks of one thing. God’s power is an expression of the ‘divine nature,’ and the honour ascribed to God by man is finally no other than an affirmation of this nature.⁴⁷

The use of δόξα in the New Testament is similar to the LXX. It is used generally in the NT to express the ‘divine mode of being’.⁴⁸ It is basically an expression of God and his divine honour, splendour, power and radiance. These attributes of God are also given to Jesus. In Luke 2:9 it is clear that it is the glory of the Lord. The same can be said e.g. about Acts 7:55; 22:11 which is from Paul’s Damascus experience, and which communicates a strong manifestation of God. A similar use can be seen in Eph 1:17; Rev 15:8; 21:23. 2 Pet 1:17 states clearly that Jesus received the glory from God. Tit 2:13 speaks about the glory of God and the glory of Christ as the same. τῆς δόξης in Jas 2:1 is used about Christ indicating his divinity. The same use is found e.g. in Mark 8:38; 10:37; 13:26; Matt 19:38; 25:31; Luke 9:31f; 1 Cor 2:8; 2 Cor 4:6; 1 Pet 1:11; 1:21; 4:13; 5:1; 1 Tim 3:16. The doxologies of the New Testament are an expression of the glory of God, see e.g. Luke 2:14; 19:38; Rom 11:36; 16:27; Eph 3:21; Phil 4:20; 1 Tim 1:17; Rev 4:9 and 7:12.

Summary of v. 1

V. 1 is the *propositio* of Jas 2:1–13, and it takes the form of a strong admonition. Using sibling terminology with similarities both to Jewish-Christian tradition and Greek tradition, indicating a strong love bond between James and his readers, indicating a subtext of mutual honouring and of harmony, James basically says that Christian faith is incompatible with

⁴⁶ Kittel, “δοκέω κτλ.” 243.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 244.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 247.

acts of partiality. He draws on Jewish-Christian traditions when making this point and these traditions should be well-known among a Christian assembly consisting of both Jews and Gentiles. However, living as they are in a Roman society, the cultural intertexture is probably in direct conflict with the Jewish-Christian tradition and this might be the reason why the admonition is proper and relevant. Read with a postcolonial optic we can see already in the *propositio* that several binaries are relevant and linked together. The binaries coloniser—colonised, power—powerless, and centre—margin are all exemplified through the problem of προσωποληψία. Already here in v. 1 we can see through a postcolonial optic that the author of James tries to change these binaries by saying that Rome is not the ideological centre, because Roman cultural etiquette should not have defining power over how Christians treat the other. The defining centre of power concerning how the Christians live their lives in the Roman Empire, should be their own faith in Jesus Christ.

Due to his use of the term ἡ δόξα in relation to Christ, it is evident that the author of James does understand the glory of God and the glory of Christ as parallel. The term indicates an understanding of Christ as divine, thus the faith in Christ is the same as faith in God.

VERSES 2–4—RATIO

² Ἐὰν γὰρ εἰσέλθῃ εἰς συναγωγὴν ὑμῶν ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος ἐν ἐσθῇτι λαμπρᾷ, εἰσέλθῃ δὲ καὶ πτωχὸς ἐν ῥυπαρᾷ ἐσθῇτι, ³ ἐπιβλέψῃτε δὲ ἐπὶ τὸν φοροῦντα τὴν ἐσθῆτα τὴν λαμπράν καὶ εἴπητε· σὺ κάθου ὧδε καλῶς, καὶ τῷ πτωχῷ εἴπητε· σὺ στῆθι ἐκεῖ ἢ κάθου ὑπὸ τὸ ὑποπόδιόν μου, ⁴ οὐ διεκρίθητε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς καὶ ἐγένεσθε κριταὶ διαλογισμῶν πονηρῶν;

² For if a man with a gold ring and in bright clothing, and also a beggar in filthy clothing should happen to enter your assembly, ³ and you look at the one who is wearing the bright clothes with favour and tell him, “You may sit here, on an honourable seat”, whereas you tell the beggar, “You may stand there, or sit under my footstool”, ⁴ have you not then wavered among yourselves and become evil-thinking judges?

Inner Texture

Following the *propositio* of v. 1 these verses are the *ratio* of James’ argument. The *propositio* in v. 1, the admonition and warning, is necessary due to the events described in the *ratio*, a situation of partiality. It remains of course to be investigated whether this is a situation with a real-life background or if it is a hypothetical but unlikely situation. The rhetorical point

is that the addressees do exactly what James has just told them not to do: They *are* in a very visible way showing partiality. The *topos* of the *ratio* is repeated in vv. 5–7, and through the use of Lev 19:15,18 in vv. 9–10.

Further on an inner texture level, one can say that v. 4 forms an *inclusio* with v. 1, as it emphasises that by the action described in vv. 2–3, the addressees are becoming evil-thinking judges and wavering among themselves. Vv. 2–3 are in other words bracketed by the *inclusio* formed by vv. 1 and 4.

The example of the *ratio* is in the form of a conditional sentence. An understanding of this conditional sentence is critical to the question of whether the situation described is likely to occur or not. Hence I shall investigate the conditional sentence.

Reflections on the Conditional Sentence of vv. 2–4

According to Daniel B. Wallace, there are more than 600 formal conditional sentences in the New Testament, and in addition hundreds of implicit conditions.⁴⁹ This of course makes an understanding of the conditional sentences significant for an exegesis of almost any New Testament text. An understanding of the conditional sentence is particularly significant for the interpretation of Jas 2:1–13, as there are four conditional sentences in these verses.⁵⁰ Structurally a conditional sentence has two parts, a *protasis* ('if') and an *apodosis* ('then').⁵¹ In vv. 2–4 the *protasis* is vv. 2–3 and it is compound, whereas the *apodosis* is v. 4. Semantically there are three main relations between the *protasis* and the *apodosis* of a conditional sentence: a) cause-effect, b) evidence-inference, and c) equivalence.⁵² Though there is some overlap between these three types,⁵³ the semantic relation between the *protasis* and the *apodosis* of vv. 2–4 seems to be of evidence-inference.

There are four main categories of the conditional sentence. Blass, Debrunner and Rehkopf⁵⁴ and Hoffmann and von Siebenthal⁵⁵ name these

⁴⁹ Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 680.

⁵⁰ Also in vv. 8, 9 and 11.

⁵¹ Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 682; Ernst G. Hoffmann and Heinrich von Siebenthal, *Griechische Grammatik zum Neuen Testament* (Riehen: Immanuel, 1985), 546.

⁵² Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 682.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 684.

⁵⁴ Friedrich Blass, Albert Debrunner, and Friedrich Rehkopf, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*, 14th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), § 371.

⁵⁵ Hoffmann and Siebenthal, *Griechische Grammatik zum Neuen Testament*, § 280.

realis,⁵⁶ *irrealis*, *potentialis* and *eventualis*, the latter being the category found in Jas 2:2–4.⁵⁷ *Eventualis* is recognised by ἐάν + subjunctive in the *protasis* and either future or present or perfect indicative, sometimes aorist indicative,⁵⁸ in the *apodosis*.⁵⁹ Subjunctive is the natural choice of mood for the *protasis* of *eventualis* as it can be said to “represent the verbal action (or state) as uncertain but probable”.⁶⁰ In Koine Greek the subjunctive mood is used for possibility, hypothetical possibility as well as probability.⁶¹ In conditional sentences “both the particle [i.e., ἄν] [...] and the subjunctive give the condition a sense of contingency”.⁶² The *protasis* of *eventualis* “bezeichnet etwas, womit man—unter Umständen—rechnen kann oder muss: Wenn bzw. immer wenn A gilt (damit kann oder muss man rechnen), so gilt auch B.”⁶³ According to Wallace, what he calls the third class conditional sentence, i.e. *eventualis*, should generally be understood as presenting the condition as “uncertain of fulfilment, but still likely”.⁶⁴ This gives potentially many different interpretations of a conditional sentence of the category *eventualis* (Wallace’s third class):

The *third* class condition encompasses a broad range of potentialities in Koine Greek. It depicts what is *likely to occur* in the *future*, what could *possibly occur*, or even what is only *hypothetical* and will not occur.⁶⁵

Eventualis is divided into two sub-categories, which Hoffmann and von Siebenthal call ‘speziell-prospektiver Fall’ and ‘generell-prospektiver Fall’. In ‘speziell-prospektiver Fall’ the condition is understood as a future possibility which will have certain consequences. This is the conditional sentence with future in the *apodosis*. There is an example of this sub-category of *eventualis* in Jas 4:15. The second sub-category of *eventualis* is

⁵⁶ It is important to note that *realis* does not refer to the condition’s relation to reality as real, but to the relation between the *protasis* and the *apodosis* as real, see *Ibid.*, § 281a.

⁵⁷ For further references to *realis*, *irrealis* and *potentialis*, see Blass, Debrunner, and Rehkopf, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*, §§ 371–372, and Hoffmann and Siebenthal, *Griechische Grammatik zum Neuen Testament*, §§ 280–281 and §§ 283–284.

⁵⁸ Blass, Debrunner, and Rehkopf, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*, § 373. Hoffmann and von Siebenthal name this ‘gnomischer aorist’, see Hoffmann and Siebenthal, *Griechische Grammatik zum Neuen Testament*, § 282a.

⁵⁹ Wallace generally uses the same criteria, but has a different naming of the four categories. Whereas most grammarians use *realis*, *irrealis*, *potentialis* and *eventualis*, he uses first, second, third and fourth class.

⁶⁰ Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 461. (italics by Wallace).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 462.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 469.

⁶³ Hoffmann and Siebenthal, *Griechische Grammatik zum Neuen Testament*, 554, § 282a.

⁶⁴ Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 696. (italics by Wallace).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* (italics by Wallace).

‘generell-prospektiver Fall’. This sub-category is an expression of regularity and the *protasis* is recognised by ἐάν + aorist or present subjunctive, whereas the *apodosis* normally is present indicative or gnomic aorist.⁶⁶ There is an example of this sub-category in Jas 2:17.

The verbal forms of the *apodosis* in v. 4 are aorist indicatives. In general aorist can be understood as punctual, either start or end of the verbal action.⁶⁷ More specifically there is constative, ingressive, consummative, gnomic and proleptic aorist.⁶⁸ Aorist indicative can normally be understood as past tense; however, we know from classical Greek that aorist indicative can also be understood as gnomic aorist, i.e. aorist used to “present a timeless, general fact”.⁶⁹ Although gnomic aorist is rarely used in the New Testament—the only examples I could find in grammars are Jas 1:11; 1 Pet 1:24;⁷⁰ Jas 1:23;⁷¹ Matt 23:2 and Luke 7:35⁷²—it might be argued that the aorist indicative of the *apodosis* of Jas 2:2–4 is gnomic aorist. This would be in accord with my opinion of the aorist indicatives of the *apodosis* in Jas 2:4. They are to be understood as punctual constative: given the situation described in the *protasis*, be it possible or hypothetical, soberly observed, your actions have as a consequence that you have wavered among yourselves and they have made you nothing other than evil-thinking judges. The aorist indicatives indicate that one can ascertain that every time the assembly is acting as in the example in vv. 2–3, the consequence is that they have wavered among each other and become evil-thinking judges. In other words the aorist represents a general fact and could as such possibly be understood as gnomic aorist. The *apodosis* of Jas 2:4 is a rare instance of gnomic aorist and this particular conditional sentence has the form of eventuality and also ‘generell-prospektiver Fall’ as sub-category.

Out of Wallace’s three main understandings of the third class conditional sentence (*eventualis*), all are in agreement with Blass et al. as well as Hoffmann and von Siebenthal’s understanding of the conditional sentence as *eventualis*. However, his first understanding, something that is likely to occur in the future, is only relevant for ‘speziell-prospektiver Fall’. Since I

⁶⁶ Hoffmann and Siebenthal, *Griechische Grammatik zum Neuen Testament*, § 282a.

⁶⁷ Ibid., § 194e.

⁶⁸ Ibid., § 194f–j and Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 557–564.

⁶⁹ Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 562.

⁷⁰ Hoffmann and Siebenthal, *Griechische Grammatik zum Neuen Testament*, 327, § 199i.

⁷¹ Blass, Debrunner, and Rehkopf, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*, 272,

§ 333.

⁷² Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 562.

have already disqualified 'speziell-prospektiver Fall' as a possible interpretation of the conditional sentence of Jas 2:2–4, I am left with two possible starting points for the translation according to Wallace, either that the events described in the condition can possibly occur, i.e. there is a reality link, or that the events described are only hypothetical and are mentioned for the sake of argument, but with no reality link.⁷³ In addition 'generell-prospektiver Fall' is understood by Hoffmann and von Siebenthal as something that, given certain circumstances, one has to count on. This gives 'generell-prospektiver Fall' a certain reality link. In other words there are the interpretative possibilities of possibility which presupposes a reality link, a hypothetical example with no reality link, and something that will happen on a regular basis given certain circumstances, with reality link.

It seems to me that the conditional sentence in Jas 2:2–4 is definitely to be understood as something possible, but also probably as something that one has to count on given certain circumstances. Consequently there must be a link between the example given in Jas 2:2–4 and the actual experiences of the community.⁷⁴ I would say that the rhetorical relation between *propositio* and *ratio* is relevant in the determination of the conditional sentence. Is the *propositio* at all necessary if the *ratio* is unlikely? Probably not. Given that this is not a rhetorical exaggeration, one could say that if the *ratio* is unlikely, there is strictly speaking no need for the admonition of the *propositio* in this particular text. If the *topos* of the *ratio* is unlikely, there is either a need for a different *propositio* or for a different *ratio*. This strictly inner textual observation is an argument for the conditional sentence of the *ratio* being possible and something that one has to count on.⁷⁵

⁷³ This latter seems to be Dibelius' view on the conditional sentence, see Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 162: "Jak will einfach an einem Beispiel argumentieren und wählt dazu nicht einen geringen, sondern einen krassen Beweis von προσωποληψία, den er überdies 2,3 in ganz unrealistischen Worten ausmalt." Mussner and Moo make a similar argument to Dibelius, see Mussner, *Der Jakobusbrief*, 117: "Die Schilderung des 'Falles' gehört zum Stil und ist von der gemeinten Sache zu unterscheiden. Damit ist nicht gesagt, dass nicht konkrete Anlässe in den Gemeinden vorlagen, die Jak bestimmten, die Sache auf diese Weise zu behandeln." Moo holds that "the sequel to the example (vv. 6–7) makes clear that the readers were engaging in discrimination very much like this", see Moo, *The Letter of James*, 102.

⁷⁴ In disagreement with Dibelius, see Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 162. Ahrens on the other hand argues that the Epistle of James criticises the Roman societal structure and that Jas 2:1–13 is part of this critique, hence, the example is realistic, see Ahrens, *Der Realitäten Widerschein oder Arm und Reich im Jakobusbrief*, 136.

⁷⁵ Laws has made a similar argument. See Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 98: "Yet for the example to convey his message it must presumably bear some

However, another element from the inner texture is the logical connection between the *protasis* and the *apodosis*. Is the *protasis* necessary for the *apodosis* to be true?⁷⁶ No, not necessarily. The assembly can show partiality on the basis of rank and thus be accused of wavering among each other and being evil-thinking judges even if the partiality is not between a man with a gold ring and a beggar. There can be other forms of partiality in the assembly that would be evidence of them wavering among each other. Hence, the *apodosis* can be true independently of the *protasis*. However, as I shall show later, v. 4 seems to be a specific reference to Jewish teaching about partial judgement, later reflected in Rabbinical teaching on Lev 19:15 where there are specific references to filthy clothing vs. fine clothing and standing vs. sitting, hence the *protasis* does not seem to have been chosen by coincidence. On a logical level, though, the *apodosis* can be true independently of the *protasis*. However, it does not quite make sense to address a different problem than the actual problem in the assembly. From this, I have to draw the conclusion that the interpretation of the conditional sentence should be that it is possible and something that one has to count on given certain circumstances.

Although I have argued that the conditional sentence from a grammatical point of view is possible and something that one has to count on given certain circumstances, one cannot draw a certain conclusion about the understanding of the conditional sentence of Jas 2:2–4 and its link to reality strictly on grammatical premises alone. There are also other significant factors such as who the two persons entering the assembly in vv. 2–3 are and whether it is realistic that these two specific persons would come to the assembly. To find out whether this is a realistic situation, we have to know something about the nature of the gathering and the role of the Christian assemblies in Roman civic life. It is also significant whether the persons entering are part of the assembly or visitors. I will address these questions later in the exegesis.

relation to his readers' experience, and portray a situation which either has or could obtain for them". Roy Bowen Ward and Pedrito Maynard-Reid have made similar arguments as well, see Ward, "Partiality in the Assembly" 88, and Maynard-Reid, *Poverty and Wealth in James*, 53.

⁷⁶ A question about the logical relationship between the *protasis* and the *apodosis* can also be put the opposite way. Is the *apodosis* necessary for the *protasis* to be true? However, this is not relevant for the understanding of this conditional sentence.

Intertexture of συναγωγή ὑμῶν (v. 2)

Another decisive element for the interpretation of Jas 2:2–4 is the nature of the gathering. To determine the nature of the gathering, both the expression συναγωγή ὑμῶν, and the two persons entering are significant. Let me first have a look at the expression συναγωγή ὑμῶν and then at the individual characters of Jas 2:2–3.

The ratio in vv. 2–4 starts with two men entering συναγωγή ὑμῶν. On a linguistic level, συναγωγή originally meant ‘a bringing together, assembling’.⁷⁷ Συναγωγή as an assembly is according to Wolfgang Schrage in *TDNT* “extremely rare in the NT”.⁷⁸ Most references to συναγωγή in the NT are references to the building where a Jewish community assembled.⁷⁹ However, both Wolfgang Schrage and Karl Ludwig Schmidt argue that συναγωγή in Jas 2:2 is used in a Christian sense either for the Christian house of assembly or for the Christian assembly as such.⁸⁰ Since the addressees of the Epistle are Christians and ὑμῶν refers to them, συναγωγή must be understood in a Christian sense, argues Schrage. The only debatable issue is whether this refers to the meeting place or the meeting itself.⁸¹

In the Early Church συναγωγή was mostly used about the building where the Jewish community assembled; however, it was also used for Judaism as a whole and also for meetings and meeting places for the Christians.⁸² However, I have argued in the section ‘Addressees’ in chapter two that the addressees of the Epistle of James are Christians of both Jewish and Gentile origin. Therefore συναγωγή ὑμῶν should be understood as the Christian meeting or meeting place, i.e. a parallel term to ἐκκλησία.⁸³

⁷⁷ Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 963; Wolfgang Schrage, “συναγωγή κτλ.” in *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, vol. VII, 798–852, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 799.

⁷⁸ Schrage, “συναγωγή κτλ.” 828.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 830.

⁸⁰ See *Ibid.*, 837f; Karl Ludwig Schmidt, “καλέω κτλ.” in *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, vol. III, 487–536, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 518.

⁸¹ Schrage, “συναγωγή κτλ.” 837. Johnson argues that the absence of the definite article has as a consequence that the emphasis of the term lies on “the synagogue as an assembly of people”, hence the meeting itself, see Johnson, *The Letter of James*, 222.

⁸² Schrage, “συναγωγή κτλ.” 838–840.

⁸³ Dibelius argues somewhat the same, that the personal pronoun is used to indicate possession, hence this is a Christian συναγωγή, see Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 165. It seems that it is a premise for Dibelius that the synagogue is a building, not only an assembling. Moo also argues that the use of the pronoun “implies that Christians had control over the meetings” rather than that the Christians were attending Jewish synagogue meetings, see Moo, *The Letter of James*, 102f. Reicke chooses a slightly different alternative. It seems to be a premise for him that this is a Christian assembly, however, his comment

Hartin understands the use of the term συναγωγή as an indication of the closeness to the heritage of Israel that is an argument for an early dating of the Epistle.⁸⁴ The use of the term συναγωγή in James is part of this ‘closeness’:

This is the only usage of the term in the New Testament for a Christian gathering. The usual term is *ekklesia* (see 5:14). Why then did James use *synagogue* and not the more normal term *ekklesia*? Without doubt this indicates James’s closeness to the earliest stages of Christianity, when a full separation from its Jewish roots had not yet occurred.⁸⁵

I have already dated the Epistle of James to the late first century, after the Jewish revolt. Christianity was until then understood more or less as part of Judaism. In such a context an epistle strongly influenced by Judaism, as the Epistle of James is, would not be an oddity. After 70 C.E., however, the situation might have been somewhat more segregated. Judaism and Christianity seem to have developed separately and Christianity became an independent religion. However, there were Jewish-Christian assemblies after 70 C.E. that kept some distance to the Jewish synagogues. Hence, the distinct Jewish flavour to the Epistle of James is not necessarily an argument against a late dating of the Epistle. As a comment to Hartin, I would first say that I agree with him: the use of the term συναγωγή indicates closeness to the early stages of Christianity. However, this closeness does not have to be seen in terms of a timeline. It can very well be a closeness of thought and theology, without being closeness in time. The Jewish-Christian assemblies after 70 C.E. would have such a closeness in theology and thought, hence, it does not necessarily say anything about a dating of the Epistle.

As to whether συναγωγή should be understood not only as a Christian assembly but also as an actual assembly house, a building, I would prefer

on the use of the term συναγωγή is that “the author expresses himself in conformity with certain Jewish interests among them [the assembly]”, see Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, 27. Laws seems to be of the opinion that since ἐκκλησία is used in James for the Christian community, συναγωγή should probably be understood in a broader sense. She draws on secular Greek use of the word to conclude that its meaning is probably “the occasion of a meeting or assembly”, see Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 100. Ἐκκλησία is only used in James in Jas 5:14.

⁸⁴ Hartin, *James*, 24.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 118. Adamson makes a similar argument, see James B. Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 105: “The term *assembly* or ‘synagogue,’ here only in the NT applied with a Christian connotation, confirms the early date of the Epistle of James, which, however, also uses the commoner Greek word for ‘church’ in 5:14.”

to keep the ambiguity of the Greek.⁸⁶ There is a parallel ambiguity to the English term 'Jewish-Christian assembly' as there is to the term συναγωγή, and I would prefer keeping it like that.⁸⁷

I have concluded that συναγωγή ὑμῶν is a Christian assembly. The next question is who the two persons entering this συναγωγή are. I shall now go on to identify the two individual characters of Jas 2:2–4: ὁ ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος and ὁ πτωχός.

Identity and Cultural Texture of the ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος (v. 2)

There are two persons entering the συναγωγή, a man wearing a gold ring and shining white clothes, and a beggar in filthy clothes. The beggar has to stand or sit under a person's footstool, whereas the man wearing the gold ring is given an honourable seat. The reaction to the visit of the two by the assembly is to give them differential seating. This reaction is by James said to be to waver among each other, hence it is seen as evil. Who are the two persons entering the assembly and what was their rank? Why is the action by the congregation inappropriate according to James?

Most interpreters of the Epistle of James hold that the ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος in Jas 2:2 is a very rich man.⁸⁸ This is not a specific enough

⁸⁶ In agreement with Adamson, see Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, 105.

⁸⁷ Maynard-Reid also values the ambiguity of the Greek word, however he seems to conclude that the primary meaning in Jas 2:2 is with reference to the building, see Maynard-Reid, *Poverty and Wealth in James*, 54. Mussner on the other hand concludes that συναγωγή probably means the assembly of the Christians rather than their place of assembly, see Mussner, *Der Jakobusbrief*, 117.

⁸⁸ See Rudolf Hoppe, *Der theologische Hintergrund des Jakobusbriefes*, FB, vol. 28 (Würzburg: Echter, 1977), 78; Rudolf Stier, *The Words of the Risen Saviour, and Commentary on the Epistle of St James*, trans. Rev. William B. Pope, Clark's Foreign Theological Library: Third Series, vol. IV (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1859), 320ff; Sigurd Odland, *Jakobs Brev til "de tolv stammer i adspredelsen"* (Kristiania: Alb. Cammermeyer, 1889), 130; Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 164; Alexander Ross, *The Epistles of James and John* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, LTD., 1954), 46; Balz and Schrage, *Die "Katholischen" Briefe*, 24; R.V.G. Tasker, *The General Epistle of James: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC (London: Inter Varsity Press, 1957; reprint, 1974), 56; Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, 102, 106; Maynard-Reid, *Poverty and Wealth in James*, 57–58; Hartin, *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus*, 90; George M. Stulac, *James*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 1993), 89f; Michael J. Townsend, *The Epistle of James*, Epworth Commentaries (London: Epworth, 1994), 35f; Ahrens, *Der Realitäten Widerschein oder Arm und Reich im Jakobusbrief*, 63, 115; S.H. Ong, *A Strategy for a Metaphorical Reading of the Epistle of James* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1996), 87–92; Penner, *The Epistle of James and Eschatology: Re-reading an Ancient Christian Letter*, 270f; Webber, *Reader Response Analysis of the Epistle of James*, 83f; Kurt A. Richardson, *James*, NAC, vol. 36 (Broadman & Holman, 1997), 110–111; Manabu Tsuji, *Glaube zwischen Vollkommenheit und Verweltlichung: Eine Untersuchung zur literarischen Gestalt und zur inhaltlichen Kohärenz des Jako-*

identification as there are three indications in the text that the man with the gold ring is a member of the equestrian order. I have given a thorough presentation of these three signs in the chapter on social and cultural intertexture, and therefore a short repetition is sufficient here. First of all, during the first-century Roman Empire, the gold ring was an insignia ring for the equestrian order.⁸⁹ Second, members of the equestrian order, as well as senators, had seating privileges.⁹⁰ These seating privileges were originally limited to the theatre and the circus, but there are indications that equestrians were given honourable seating wherever they came. Likewise, at the other end of the scale, poor, women, freedmen, gladiators and slaves were seated in the far back rows or even standing.⁹¹ Third, membership of the equestrian order was displayed through clothing. The equestrians had the right to wear the *angustus clavus*, which was a narrow purple band. They were also in a position where at least some of the members of the order were eligible for political office. If so, they would wear the candidate's toga, the *toga candida*.⁹² The expression ἐσθῆς λαμπρά is

busbriefes, WUNT, 2. Reihe, vol. 93 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 73; Robert W. Wall, *Community of the Wise: The Letter of James*, The New Testament in Context (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1997), 103; Matthias Konradt, *Christliche Existenz nach dem Jakobusbrief: Eine Studie zu seiner soteriologischen und ethischen Konzeption*, SUNT, vol. 22 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 137–138; Richard Bauckham, *James*, New Testament Readings (London: Routledge, 1999), 102, 137, 188, 194; Patrick J. Hartin, *A Spirituality of Perfection: Faith in Action in the Letter of James* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1999), 49–50; Christoph Burchard, *Der Jakobusbrief*, HNT, vol. 15/1 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 98; Wachob, *The voice of Jesus in the social rhetoric of James*, 173; Edgar, *Has God not Chosen the Poor? The Social Setting of the Epistle of James*, 167f; Jackson-McCabe, *Logos and Law in the Letter of James: The Law of Nature, the Law of Moses, and the Law of Freedom*, 157f; John P. Keenan, *The Wisdom of James: Parallels with Mahayana Buddhism*, The Newman Press Biblical Scholarly Studies (New York: The Newman Press, 2005), 68. Sharon H. Ringe does also understand the ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος to be a rich man, however, she also interprets the textual unit within the context of the Roman Empire. Although she does not identify the ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος as an equestrian, she says that the rich person in James 2 was a person that contributed towards providing wealth to Rome, and that was one of the main purposes of the colonies. See Ringe, “The Letter of James” 373.

The overall arguments concerning rich and poor in James of Dibelius, Maynard-Reid, Ahrens and Wachob have been elaborated in chapter three.

⁸⁹ Main classical sources for this view are Plinius, Cassius Dio and Suetonius. The specific references can be found in chapter four, see the section ‘Gold rings’.

⁹⁰ Main sources are Suetonius, Livius, Cicero, Tacitus and Plinius. For specific references, see chapter four, specifically the section ‘Seating privileges’.

⁹¹ See chapter four, specifically the section ‘Seating privileges’.

⁹² Of course, the only people who could actually wear a *toga candida* were the ones eligible for political offices, and that was only the members of the first two orders, i.e. the senators and the equestrians, see Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 52.20.1–5.

the equivalent Greek expression to *toga candida*, and the context here strengthens this interpretation of the term.⁹³ Thus, there are three very strong indications in Jas 2:2–4 that the man wearing a gold ring is an equestrian, i.e. second in rank in the first-century Roman Empire: he is wearing a gold ring, he is given an honourable seat and he is wearing a *toga candida*. Hence, the ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος is not only an equestrian, he is also a candidate for political office and as such very prominent. Laws, Tamez, Moo and Hartin suggest this identification of the ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος too, however, they are not making an exegetical point out of it. In addition Reicke refers to the ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος as a senator.⁹⁴ Kistemaker and Manton also refers to the ring as a sign of honour and nobility, but they do not refer to actual rank.⁹⁵

Now, if the ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος is an equestrian, what about the second person entering the assembly, the πτωχός?

Identity and Cultural Texture of the πτωχός (v. 2)

In the social hierarchy of the Roman Empire, the group of the πτωχοί was amongst the lowest in rank. Only women, gladiators and slaves were lower in rank.⁹⁶ The German expression ‘bettelarm’ captures their situation very well. Directly translated ‘bettelarm’ means ‘beggarly poor’. Whereas the term πένης designates the relatively poor who had to work for an income,

⁹³ The Greek expression for the Latin *toga candida* is ἐσθῆς λαμπρά, see “λαμπρός” in Liddell, Scott, and Jones, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon*. For further arguments, see chapter four, specifically the section ‘Clothing’. Other exegetes who have referred to the clothing as *toga candida* are Maier, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 107, and Mussner, *Der Jakobusbrief*, 117. Maier and Mussner do not, however, identify the ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος as an equestrian, nor do they refer to the seating privileges as significant in relation to the *toga candida*. Although Reicke does not use the term *toga candida* but ‘splendid garment’, he still links this to candidacy for elective office, hence I am in agreement with Reicke both on who the man with the gold ring is, and his position within the Roman Empire, see Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, 27. The Greek term is used in other places in the New Testament and on these occasions it does not mean *toga candida*, see e.g. Acts 10:30 where the term is used about an angel.

⁹⁴ See Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 98–99; Tamez, *The Scandalous Message of James: Faith Without Works Is Dead*, 23; Moo, *The Letter of James*, 103; and Hartin, *James*, 117f. Hartin is however of the opinion that “the context of James does not demand such a specific identification”. For the Reicke-reference, see Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, 27.

⁹⁵ See Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle of James and the Epistles of John*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 73. See also Thomas Manton, *James*, The Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton: Crossway, 1995), 19.

⁹⁶ See Shaw, “Rebels and Outsiders,” 389.

the group of the πτωχοί were the absolute poor.⁹⁷ The absolute poor lived either on subsistence level or below.⁹⁸ They did not have any means of income and therefore they were left to the mercy of other people, hence they were often beggars, but not necessarily.⁹⁹ Widows and orphans were often part of this group, as were the sick, the blind, the paralysed, etc.¹⁰⁰ In Jas 2:2 the reference to filthy clothing, ῥυπαρά ἐσθής, is probably also a sign that the person is a representative of the group of the absolute poor.¹⁰¹ In addition to this economic definition it has been suggested that the term not only denotes absolute poverty but also loss of honour. Bruce J. Malina is a proponent for this view. He states that the poor are those who

cannot maintain their inherited status due to circumstances that befall them and their families, such as debt, being in a foreign land, sickness, death of a spouse (widow), or some personal physical accident. Consequently, “poor” would not be a permanent social standing but a sort of revolving category for people who unfortunately cannot maintain their inherited status.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ I have taken the terms ‘absolute poor’ and ‘relatively poor’ from Stegemann and Stegemann, *Urchristliche Sozialgeschichte*, 88ff.

⁹⁸ See *Ibid.*, 89.

⁹⁹ This aspect is captured by the main dictionaries and lexicons of the New Testament, see e.g. Danker, ed. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 896, who presents four main understandings of the word: 1. ‘economically disadvantaged’ (originally ‘begging’), i.e. ‘dependent on others for support’ or simply ‘poor’, 2. ‘being thrust on divine resources’ (as an explanation the dictionary says: “At times the ref. is not only to the unfavorable circumstances of these people from an economic point of view; the thought is also that since they are oppressed and disillusioned they are in special need of God’s help, and may be expected to receive it shortly”), 3. ‘lacking in spiritual worth’ and 4. ‘being extremely inferior in quality, miserable, shabby’. See also Friedrich Hauck, “πτωχός κτλ.” in TDNT, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, vol. VI, 886–887, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 886: “Whereas πένης denotes one who has to earn his living because he has no property πτωχός denotes the complete destitution which forces the poor to seek the help of others by begging.” (Hauck has only written the part of the TDNT article concerning πτωχός in the Greek world.) However according to Bammel, who has written the rest of the article in TDNT concerning πτωχός, this is the usual term for the poor in the New Testament, not πένης, see Ernst Bammel, “πτωχός κτλ.” in TDNT, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, vol. VI, 888–915, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 902.

¹⁰⁰ Stegemann and Stegemann, *Urchristliche Sozialgeschichte*, 91.

¹⁰¹ In agreement with Johnson, who is of the opinion that πτωχός refers to material poverty and that “the degree of poverty is expressed by the characterization of the clothing as ῥυπαρά”, see Johnson, *The Letter of James*, 222. (italics by Johnson). Adamson also with reference to the clothes calls the πτωχός ‘beggary’, see Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, 106.

¹⁰² Malina, *The New Testament World*, 106. What Malina in this citation calls ‘inherited status’ is directly linked to honour by Malina himself earlier in the text: “The status into which one is born, regardless of how high or low, is normally honourable,” (p. 105).

Thus a πτωχός was a marginalised person.¹⁰³ Even though Malina argues that πτωχός principally was not an economic term, there is no contradiction to the perspective of πτωχός as one who lived at subsistence level or below. In practical terms, a person who was deprived of his/her inherited status/honour through debt, sickness, becoming a widow, etc., would be forced to live as an absolute poor, a 'bettelarm'. The group of the πεινητές on the other hand had some way of earning a living.¹⁰⁴ Πένης indicates that a person was poor in the sense that he or she was "obliged to work for a living, but not being reduced to begging".¹⁰⁵ This group could sustain their families.¹⁰⁶ They were often part of the urban artisans.¹⁰⁷ A TLG-search on πτωχός makes it evident that the aspect of begging is very strong within the classical literature as well.¹⁰⁸

In Jas 2:2 the group of the πτωχοί is represented in the singular, πτωχός, whereas in Jas 2:5 the group is represented in the plural, πτωχοί. This difference between vv. 2 and 5 is worth paying attention to. The πτωχός of v. 2 is one specific representative of the bigger group of the absolute poor, whereas the πτωχοί of v. 5 is an expression for the group as such. The πτωχός of v. 2 therefore needs a more specific identification than 'absolute poor'. Against the background of the utter contrast of the *ratio* between the ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος and the πτωχός, a relevant identification of the

¹⁰³ Edgar argues this view as well, and says that the poor in James are marginalised and as such close to the Jesus movement, see Edgar, *Has God not Chosen the Poor? The Social Setting of the Epistle of James*, 111–114. His main focus however, is on the poor as wandering charismatics, see chapter three.

¹⁰⁴ Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 795.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Stegemann and Stegemann, *Urchristliche Sozialgeschichte*, 89.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 91.

¹⁰⁸ See e.g. the use of πτωχός in Dio Chrysostomos, *Discourses*, trans. J.W. Cohoon, 1st ed., LCL, vol. I (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971; reprint, 3), Discourse 7.32.3; 9.8.6 og 9.9.5; 11.15.4, and Dio Chrysostomos, *Discourses*, trans. J.W. Cohoon, 1st ed., LCL, vol. II (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1977; reprint, 3), Discourse 13.11.2; 14.22.2 og 4; 19.4.2, and Dio Chrysostomos, *Discourses*, trans. H. Lamar Crosby, 1st ed., LCL, vol. V (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985; reprint, 2), Discourse 66.3.7; 66.20.5 and 8 and 71.3.7. See also the use of πτωχός in Epictetus, *The Discourses as Reported by Arrian, the Manual, and Fragments: in two volumes*, trans. W.A. Oldfather, 1st ed., LCL, vol. II (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985; reprint, 5), Book 3.11.4.4; 4.1.43.3; 17.1.2 and Fragment 11.9. Further, there is a very relevant reference in Lucianus, where δοῦλος, πένης and πτωχός respectively are used with the meanings 'slave', 'poor' and 'beggar', see Lucianus, *Lucian in eight volumes*, trans. A.M. Harmon, 1st ed., LCL, vol. IV (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969; reprint, 3), 96f: *Menippus, or the descent into Hades*, Section 14, line 9.

πτωχός is a beggar.¹⁰⁹ A beggar represents the very opposite of the equestrian. However, when the word is in the plural, I hold that it represents not only beggars in plural, but in a somewhat wider sense the group of the absolute poor. Although many individuals in this group would be beggars, πτωχοί do not constitute only beggars. Anybody who was dependent on others for his or her living would be in this group. It includes beggars, widows, orphans, sick, paralyzed, blind, etc. This understanding of the group of the πτωχοί and of the individual πτωχός differs from the Dibelian view of the poor in James as pious poor, which as I have shown, was taken up by Wachob and Hutchinson Edgar. On the other hand it is more in line with the view of Tamez, Maynard-Reid and Ahrens, who together with Wachob and Hutchinson Edgar all have focused on the issue of poor and rich in the Epistle of James. Ahrens specifically argues against the understanding of the poor in James as pious poor.

In the Epistle of James the group of the πτωχοί plays a significant role. They are represented in different ways throughout the Epistle. The first we meet are the ταπεινός, the humble/lowly/insignificant/weak/poor. The ταπεινοί are introduced to the reader of the Epistle already in 1:9f. The word ὁ ταπεινός is repeated in Jas 4:6 where Prov 3:34 is quoted, and the corresponding verb is used in Jas 4:10. The quotation of Prov 3:34 serves the same point as Jas 1:9f and 4:10, namely that the humble shall be exalted and the rich/proud shall be brought low.¹¹⁰ The next representatives for the group of the absolute poor are the ὀρφανοί and the χήραι, the orphans and the widows of Jas 1:27.¹¹¹ The main point of Jas 1:27 should be seen against the background of v. 22 with the call to be 'doers of the word'. The concept of being doers of the word should probably be understood as one of the ways that the author expresses what true faith is. To live as a Christian is to be a doer of the word, and a doer of the word does indeed take care of the orphans and the widows, i.e. representatives of the group of the

¹⁰⁹ In agreement with Laws, see Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 99. It has been suggested that the πτωχός of James has a religious meaning, i.e. a 'pious poor', see e.g. Dibelius' excursus on rich and poor in James, Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 58–66.

¹¹⁰ Jas 1:9f: "Let the believer who is lowly boast in being raised up, and the rich in being brought low, because the rich will disappear like a flower in the field." Jas 4:6: "But he gives all the more grace; therefore it says, 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble'." Jas 4:10: "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you."

¹¹¹ Jas 1:27: "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world."

πτωχοί.¹¹² In other words, already from the beginning of the Epistle it is clear that the group of the absolute poor is significant.

Our next encounter with the group is in chapter two, as we know, first with a beggar, then the whole group. In addition to Jas 2:1–13, Jas 2:14–17 is also significant in understanding the role of the πτωχοί in James. Jas 2:14–17 draws on the same concept as Jas 1:27, the relation between doing the word and hearing the word, the relation between faith and works. Faith and works must be connected, and faith is something that one has to act on. The example of Jas 2:14–17 is how one should treat a brother or a sister, i.e. fellow Christians, who are naked, γυμνός, and lacking daily food, ἐφήμερος τροφή.¹¹³ As I have shown in chapter four, clothing was significant for establishing a person's rank. Lack of clothing, dirty or filthy clothing were all signs of very low rank or absolute poverty, as was hunger.¹¹⁴ In other words, the author of James tells his readers that true faith has as a consequence that one should take good care of persons belonging to the group of the πτωχοί. In James 5 the group of the πτωχοί is represented by the one who is suffering (κακοπαθέω v. 13), and the one who is sick (ἀσθενέω v. 14). The πτωχοί are possibly also represented in James 5 by the δίκαιος, the righteous one. Jas 5:1–6 represents a harsh admonition against οἱ πλούσιοι, the rich, and both the righteous one, the one who is suffering and the one who is sick probably should be understood as contrasts to the rich, hence, they are representatives for the group of the πτωχοί.

One could very well say that on a structural level the πτωχοί are significant in the Epistle of James because the Epistle is both opened and closed with theology about them. The πτωχοί shall be exalted and the wealth of the rich shall wither due to their exploitations of the very same. The only chapter that has no reference to the πτωχοί is James 3. Otherwise the group of the πτωχοί is represented in the Epistle of James by the

¹¹² For a further elaboration on being doers of the word and the structural significance of this within the whole Epistle of James, see the section on this issue in chapter two.

¹¹³ Jas 2:14–17: “What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill’, and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.”

¹¹⁴ Stegemann and Stegemann, *Urchristliche Sozialgeschichte*, 92: “Der Begriff ‘Nackt’ (*gymnos*) bezeichnet in diesem Zusammenhang Menschen, die keinen Mantel, sondern nur ein Untergewand trugen bzw. nur Fetzen am Leibe hatten. In jedem Fall wird damit ein niedriger sozialer Status ausgedrückt. [...] Ein weiteres Kennzeichen der absolute Armen ist ihr Hunger (und Durst). Der Zusammenhang zwischen mangelnder Bekleidung und mangelnder Nahrung scheint typisch zu sein (Lk 3,11; Mt 25,35f; Jak 2,15f).”

humble (ταπεινός), by the orphans (ὀρφανοί) and the widows (χήραι), by the beggar (πτωχός), by the naked (γυμνοί), the persons who lack daily food (λειπόμενοι τῆς ἐφημέρου τροφῆς), and lastly the πτωχοί are represented by the one who suffer (κακοπαθέω), the one who is sick (ἀσθενέω) and the righteous one (δικαιος). To treat the group of the πτωχοί well is significant in James and a sign of true faith. This general background information from the Epistle itself does indeed sharpen the admonition of the *propositio* of Jas 2:1–13 and the *ratio* becomes a harsh accusation against the assembly.

In a Norwegian context, the contribution of Hans Kvalbein is significant when it comes to the poor in the New Testament.¹¹⁵ Regrettably the study has not been translated into English, but some of his main findings are that in Jesus' teaching in Matt 6:24/Luke 16:13; Matt 6:19–21/Luke 12:33–34; Luke 11:39–41; 12:16–21; 14:33; 19:1–10; Matt 6:25–34/Luke 12:22–31; and Matt 13:44–46 there is a strong warning against wealth. It does not, according to Kvalbein, seem that these texts argue for an ideal of poverty, however they presuppose that a new relation to God has consequences for how you manage your wealth.¹¹⁶ In the Epistle of James this perspective is at the forefront. The main point in James when it comes to the poor is probably that the way you treat them shows your faith. Faith and works are linked together. Hearing the word and doing the word are linked together, and one of the tests of this is how you treat the poor. Your faith has a consequence for how you live your life. Further, Kvalbein has found that in Luke 16:1–12; 16:19–31; Matt 6:2–4; Mark 12:41–44/Luke 21:1–4 and Mark 14:3–9 with parallels, the issue of charity is central, however it is not the main point of Jesus' teaching. That being said, Kvalbein points out that Jesus is very specific about how to donate to the poor: you shall do it in secret.¹¹⁷ In the Epistle of James to take care of the group of the πτωχοί is simply a matter of acting on your faith. The author of James does not say anything about caring for orphans/widows/persons without clothes or food, in secret. What he does say, however, in accordance with Jesus, is that as believers in Christ, the Christians are obliged to help these people. This is part of being a believer. This presentation of Kvalbein's findings and of the group of πτωχοί, and more specifically the πτωχός in the Epistle of James, shows that the teaching in the Epistle of James about

¹¹⁵ Hans Kvalbein, *Jesus og de fattige: Jesu syn på de fattige og hans bruk av ord for "fattig"*. (Oslo: Luther forlag, 1981).

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 246.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 271f.

the poor is in accordance with Jesus' teaching. James obviously draws on Jesus' teaching and I shall look into this more thoroughly later when interpreting vv. 5 and 8.

A question about the *πτωχός* in Jas 2:2 is whether this beggar is a Roman citizen or not. There is no indication in the text that he is, nor that he is not. However, we know that the poor had approximately the same low rank in society as the freedmen.¹¹⁸ The *πτωχός* in Jas 2:2 is most likely not a slave. Although the slaves were dependent on others for their livelihood, they were a different group than the *πτωχοί* and even lower in rank.

In any case the example of the *ratio* presents us with an encounter between a person from one of the lowest ranks of society, and a person from one of the highest ranks of society. The contrast between the two is enormous. Here is a beggar, basically worth nothing, being extremely inferior in status and rank, miserable and shabby, generally despised,¹¹⁹ and an equestrian, i.e. a person second in rank in the Empire, a person that must be extremely rich because he is running for office, and to run for an office you would be obliged to pay for the costs of that office. These two persons are entering the assembly more or less at the same time. What happens? The members of the assembly, according to James, treat their visitors with the proper Roman etiquette. They give the equestrian an honourable seat.¹²⁰ The beggar, on the other hand, either has to stand or sit under a footstool. That is definitely not a seat of honour.

There is nothing wrong with how the assembly is treating these two persons according to Roman etiquette. However, according to Christian etiquette, this is fundamentally wrong, as is evident from Jesus' teaching in Matt 23:6; Mark 12:38–40; Luke 11:43 and 20:45–47. In these texts there is reference both to places of honour at banquets and in the Jewish synagogue. They are condemnations of the Pharisees who like to have seats of honour and to be honoured. These texts also show that it was not only against a Roman cultural background that differential seating was an issue. One might very well argue that the Jewish-Christian assemblies followed the tradition from the Jewish synagogues with seats of honour, and that this tradition was in accordance with Roman etiquette, so that if a Roman citizen of high rank would visit, he would be given one of these

¹¹⁸ See Shaw, "Rebels and Outsiders" 389, where there is a figure of seating arrangements and rank in the Roman theatre.

¹¹⁹ Hauck, "πτωχός κτλ." 887.

¹²⁰ The adverb *καλῶς* is normally translated with 'good' or 'well', however, in the context of Jas 2:1–13 with differences of rank as a main point, 'honourable' is a better translation.

seats of honour. The argument of the author of the Epistle is that even if this is in accordance with Roman etiquette and the etiquette of the Jewish synagogue, it is not in accordance with Christian faith and Jesus' teaching. The author of James therefore puts forward a pretty strong counter cultural critique.¹²¹ One may conclude that the assembly through honouring the equestrian indicates that they are putting their trust in a Roman patron instead of in God.¹²²

Ideological Texture

The binaries found in the *propositio* are continued in the *ratio*. The binaries of centre—margin, power—powerless and coloniser—colonised are evident in the relation between the ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος and the πτωχός. It is obvious from the situation presented that the ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος represents the power, whereas the πτωχός represents the powerless. I have identified the man wearing a gold ring as an equestrian, second in rank to the senators, and we see in this text a specific example of the omnipresence of the Empire. There is a concrete imperial presence in the text, which is significant for the plot of the text.

How can we, from a postcolonial perspective, understand the reaction of the assembly to these two visitors? What they do, is that they are treating their visitors according to the proper Roman etiquette, the etiquette of the colonial power. How can this be explained postcolonially? The most obvious postcolonial explanation to this is the concept of 'hybridity'.¹²³ This is the cultural in-between space that will be found in the contact zone produced by colonialism and imperialism. It is the cultural intersection between centre and margin. Hybridity shows cultural change and therefore identity change both among coloniser and colonised. In James 2 we meet the hybrid identities of the Christian assembly. When they, in the

¹²¹ Both Ahrens and Wachob interpret this as a critique against the "societal structures of the Roman Empire" (Ahrens) or as "counter-cultural to Graeco-Roman culture" (Wachob), see chapter three.

¹²² This is similar to Edgar's view of the problem of Jas 2:1–13. Although his identification of the πτωχός and of the ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος is different than mine, he concludes that the problem in James 2 is that the members of the assembly are putting their trust in rich patrons instead of in God, see Edgar, *Has God not Chosen the Poor? The Social Setting of the Epistle of James*. This view is also in accordance with Martin Hengel. He argues that James criticises the Christian communities due to their widespread dependence on rich patrons/patronesses, and Jas 2:1–13 is an example of this critique. See Hengel, "Der Jakobusbrief als antipaulinische Polemik", 544–546. See also the presentation of Hutchinson Edgar and Hengel in chapter three.

¹²³ See e.g. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 118–121.

situation portrayed, automatically act according to the proper Roman etiquette, and apparently without questioning it, it shows a Christian community that has shifted their identity from a Christian based identity to a Roman identity. This is the main problem for the author of the Epistle. He is accusing the community for being too Roman. He is accusing the consequences of their hybridity.

The Nature of the Gathering (v. 2)

Having identified the ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος and the πτωχός as a Roman equestrian and a beggar, it is time to have a look at the nature of the gathering presented to us in James 2. To determine the nature of the gathering is important also for the final determination of the nature of the conditional sentence. As I have said before, an element relevant for making a decision about the interpretation of the conditional sentence is the cultural intertexture: is it probable that these two men, particularly the equestrian, would visit a Christian assembly? As far as I have found on an inner textual level, the conditional sentence must have its grounding in real life. There must be some realism to the example of the *ratio* for it to be relevant. When I am now going to determine the nature of the gathering, a central question must be whether this was a probable event or not.

Three main identifications of the nature of the gathering of the assembly have been proposed by scholars. They are: *a) a banquet, b) an assembly for judicial purposes, and c) a worship service in the Christian assembly.* I shall present the three alternatives thoroughly.

A Banquet

This view is argued by Randall C. Webber.¹²⁴ His interpretative starting point is that of a reader response analysis, and his main point is to interpret the Epistle of James in a hypothetical post-Pauline context. This is defined by Webber as a late first-century and early second-century reading by readers familiar with Paul's writings.¹²⁵ In doing this, Webber finds one parallel text by Paul that addresses the same issue as Jas 2:1–13, namely 1 Cor 11:17–34.¹²⁶ The situation in 1 Corinthians 11 was a community meal, and the problem according to Webber was that the participants instead

¹²⁴ Webber, *Reader Response Analysis of the Epistle of James*, 83f.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 59.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 80.

of celebrating the Lord's Supper used this occasion to celebrate banquets, becoming drunk and eating all the food before the elements were consecrated. At banquets differential treatment was common, and this was being upheld in the community meal.¹²⁷ Webber's identification of the situation in Jas 2:2–4 as a banquet rests on three main pillars. First, the parallel to 1 Corinthians 11: since that text reflects a banquet, so can Jas 2:2–4. Second, the reference to different clothing is according to Webber consistent with the setting of a formal meal.¹²⁸ Third, the reference to differential treatment indicates a banquet.¹²⁹

I consider Webber's argument for identifying the nature of the gathering as a banquet to be rather weak compared to a religious meeting or a gathering for judicial purposes. However, his point about the general favouritism displayed at banquets is a good one. In a Roman context seating privileges would follow high rank, and lack of privileges would follow low rank. If Webber's identification of the nature of the gathering were convincing, one would also have to conclude, on the basis of cultural intertexture, that the example of the *ratio* of James 2 is a realistic one grounded in real-life experiences. The conditional sentence would accordingly be either a) likely to occur in the future,¹³⁰ or b) can possibly occur.¹³¹ Since however there are no other references to a banquet in James 2, or in the Epistle of James as such, I find Webber's argument weak and cannot conclude that the example given in vv. 2–3 is a banquet.

An Assembly for Judicial Purposes

This alternative was, as far as I have been able to find out, already mentioned by Manton in 1693.¹³² It is however Roy Bowen Ward who has

¹²⁷ For more details, see *Ibid.*, 80–87.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 80.

¹³⁰ A rather free translation could then be: "If two men simultaneously enter your συναγωγή, one of them is wearing a gold ring on his finger and a *toga candida* and the other is a beggar wearing filthy clothes—this is as we know likely to occur in the future—your reaction to that will be to give the first one an honourable seat whereas the other one may stand or sit under one of the footstools."

¹³¹ A rather free translation in this case could be: "What if two men simultaneously enter your συναγωγή. One of them is wearing a gold ring on his finger and a *toga candida* and the other is a beggar wearing filthy clothes. It may not be probable, but brothers and sisters, it is possible. Your reaction to that would have been to give the first one an honourable seat whereas the other one would have stood or sat under one of the footstools."

¹³² Thomas Manton, *An Exposition on the Epistle of James*, 2nd ed., A Geneva Series Commentary (London: Billing & Sons Limited, 1968; reprint, 2), 185f. The edition used here is a reprint of the 1693 original.

provided a relatively recent argumentation for this view in an article in *Harvard Theological Review* from 1969.¹³³ Many interpreters of the Epistle of James have followed his argument later, e.g. Maynard-Reid,¹³⁴ Ahrens,¹³⁵ Hartin,¹³⁶ Wall,¹³⁷ Stulac¹³⁸ and Townsend.¹³⁹ Let me present Ward's view somewhat thoroughly.

Ward is of the opinion that there are so many obstacles tied to identifying the nature of the assembly as that of a worship service that we should provide an alternative to the ruling opinion of an assembly gathered for worship. The main problem according to Ward is that most interpreters are of the opinion that the two persons in vv. 2–3 are visitors to the assembly. All other interpretative problems hinge on this assumption. Some of these problems are: a) Is it conceivable that such a rich man would visit a Christian congregation? b) If this is just a hypothetical example and not an actual case, given that it is not conceivable that a rich man of this calibre would visit a Christian assembly, the example would be ineffective. c) A more important problem is, according to Ward, the use of *πτωχός*: Dibelius understood it as a designation for the Christians, i.e. piety of the poor. However, a *πτωχός* is one of the visitors in v. 2, i.e. not a Christian. In vv. 5–7, though, *πτωχός* should be understood again as a designation for the Christians. d) A fourth problem according to Ward, is v. 4. First of all it introduces us to forensic language; second it talks about making judgement 'among yourselves'. How can this be if the two persons are strangers?¹⁴⁰ Ward's solution is first, that the two persons in v. 2 are not visitors, and second, that the nature of the assembly is not a worship service, but a judicial assembly. (Ward's translation of the Greek *διακρίνω*, to make judgement, is somewhat more direct than my translation, to waver.) Ward finds his alternative to the ruling opinion in several rabbinic texts referring to partiality in judicial proceedings.¹⁴¹ These rabbinic texts specifically mention fine clothing vs. filthy clothing, and sitting

¹³³ Ward, "Partiality in the Assembly". The whole article is an argumentation for this view.

¹³⁴ Maynard-Reid, *Poverty and Wealth in James*, 56–58.

¹³⁵ Ahrens, *Der Realitäten Widerschein oder Arm und Reich im Jakobusbrief*, 113–115.

¹³⁶ Hartin, *James*, 131.

¹³⁷ Wall, *Community of the Wise*, 111.

¹³⁸ Stulac, *James*, 91.

¹³⁹ Townsend, *The Epistle of James*, 35f.

¹⁴⁰ For this overview of interpretative problems that Ward tries to solve, see Ward, "Partiality in the Assembly" 87–89 and 92–95.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 89.

vs. standing.¹⁴² Ward observes that the similarities between these rabbinic texts and Jas 2:2–3 are striking. Against this background he argues that συναγωγή should be understood as a judicial assembly or a legal assembly.¹⁴³ There are references to such legal assemblies in the New Testament as well, he argues,¹⁴⁴ and thus translates Jas 2:2–4 as follows:

If there should come before your judicial assembly a richly clad man and a poor man in rags, and if you should favour the richly clad man by allowing him to sit while you make the poor man stand (or, even worse, if you tell him to sit down at “my footstool”), have you not practiced partiality among yourselves and become unjust judges?¹⁴⁵

If this is the case, Ward argues, then the description of the two persons in v. 2 is not a description of two strangers visiting the worship, but rather “two men who have come before the assembly for judgement”.¹⁴⁶

The parallels that Ward has found in rabbinic literature are striking, and I find his overall argument, especially against a strictly Jewish background, better than Webber’s argument. However, a substantial critique against this argument is that the Epistle of James is too early to be put on the same footing as rabbinic Judaism. A further critique is tied to my previous argument regarding the equestrian. Is my identification of the man with the gold ring as an equestrian applicable to Ward’s interpretation of the text? Would it be probable or likely that an equestrian and a beggar were to come before the assembly for judgement? It might have been possible, but not probable. Why? Mainly because the equestrian, due to his wearing of the *toga candida*, was seeking political office, and it is not probable that an equestrian seeking political office would be associated with a Christian assembly in any other way than them being his clients. Second I would question whether an equestrian and a beggar would have anything to do with each other at all, especially in relation to any legal business. Since I consider my identification of the man with the gold ring

¹⁴² For specific references, see Ibid., 89f. One of the texts is from the Babylonian Talmud, Shebuoth 31a: “How do we know that, if two come to court, one clothed in rags and the other in fine raiment worth a hundred manehs, they should say to him, ‘Either dress like him, or dress him like you?’” Another example he gives is a comment to Lev 19:15 by R. Judah (ben El’ai, 3rd generation Tannaite): “R. Judah said, I heard that if they please to seat the two, they may sit. What is forbidden? One shall not stand and the other sit.”

¹⁴³ Ibid., 92.

¹⁴⁴ See note 22 in Ibid. The New Testament references are Matt 18:17 and 1 Cor 5:4.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 94.

as an equestrian to be rather strong, I would have to conclude that this very identification is an argument against Ward's view.

In addition I also disagree with him on several of his criticisms against an understanding of the assembly as an assembly for worship: First, against a Roman cultural background, I find it quite convincing, even probable, that an equestrian—and also just a generally rich man, since this is Ward's premise, who was a stranger to the Christian assembly—would visit them. Ward does not seem to take into account the general phenomenon of patron-client relations in the Roman Empire. A person of high rank and status would have clients that he would visit. In addition I shall later argue that the equestrian is seeking political office. If this is the case, visits to his clients would be even more important. Hence it is conceivable that such a man would visit the assembly.¹⁴⁷ Second, given that I find this example probable, my interpretation does not have a problem with the example being inadequate and ineffective.¹⁴⁸

Third, I disagree that it is a problem that *πτωχός* can have several meanings in one and the same text.¹⁴⁹ As I have already shown, *πτωχός* in the singular is probably an expression of one specific person, namely a beggar, whereas *πτωχοί* in the plural is an expression referring to the group of the absolute poor rather than an expression referring to several beggars.

Fourth, I do not agree with his assumption that v. 4 represents an interpretative problem for the more traditional identification of the assembly as a gathering for worship. Even though there is forensic language in v. 4, this does not mean that it has to have been uttered within the context of a judicial assembly. It can simply mean that partiality during worship is just as bad as being a judge with evil thoughts. In addition, it is quite possible that v. 4 is actually a reference to Leviticus 19 even if the setting is not that of a legal assembly. The meaning can be that partiality during worship is just as bad as legal partiality.¹⁵⁰ Hence I do not see the same interpretative problems with v. 4 as does Ward.¹⁵¹ However I agree with Ward that there is an interpretative challenge in the expression *οὐ διεκριθῆτε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς* in v. 4. The challenge lies in the reflexive pronoun 'yourselves'. This might include the equestrian, the beggar and the assembly, and if the equestrian and the beggar are included in the assembly, they would probably be

¹⁴⁷ Against Ward's first criticism of traditional identification.

¹⁴⁸ Against Ward's second criticism.

¹⁴⁹ Against Ward's third criticism.

¹⁵⁰ Against Ward's fourth criticism.

¹⁵¹ Neither does Laws, see Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 101.

part of the assembly. I shall come back to this later in the interpretation of Jas 2:2–4.

Against this background I conclude that Ward's argument is a very good one if you do not take into account the specific Roman cultural intertexture of James 2. However, the indications of a Roman cultural intertexture to this text are so strong that I cannot but conclude that Ward is wrong regarding the nature of the assembly in Jas 2:2–4. Hence, the nature of the assembly is that of worship and the persons entering (v. 2) are visitors, one being a beggar, the other being an equestrian seeking political office, and the nature of his visit is that of treating his clients well, so that he will be elected. My conclusion is that this situation is probable.¹⁵² Thus to come back to the understanding of the conditional sentence, it should be understood as probable and likely to occur both on a logical inner texture level and against the background of cultural intertexture.

A Christian Worship Service

That the nature of the gathering described in Jas 2:2–3 is a Christian worship service is a prominent view among interpreters of the Epistle of James.¹⁵³ Dibelius seems to be convinced of this,¹⁵⁴ as are Mussner,¹⁵⁵ Stulac¹⁵⁶ and Burchard.¹⁵⁷ Laws says that this is a Christian meeting, but that the nature of the meeting is not defined.¹⁵⁸ Richardson also refers to a Christian meeting.¹⁵⁹ Moo is more specific: "This assembly might be a gathering of the community to adjudicate a dispute between two of its members or, more likely, the weekly meeting for worship and instruction."¹⁶⁰ Some interpreters do not say explicitly that this is a Christian worship service,

¹⁵² Supporting this view, see Wall, *Community of the Wise*, 103. Against this, see Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 162; Wolfgang Schrage in Balz and Schrage, *Die "Katholischen" Briefe*, 25; Mussner, *Der Jakobusbrief*, 117.

¹⁵³ Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 101; Ward, "Partiality in the Assembly" 87. Odland seems to be of the opinion that the situation described is located in the gathering place, i.e. the house, of the Christian assembly, not however during a service. The members of the assembly are present during the incident, but the situation does not take place during a service, see Odland, *Jakobs Brev*, 129f.

¹⁵⁴ Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 165–167.

¹⁵⁵ Mussner, *Der Jakobusbrief*, 117.

¹⁵⁶ Stulac, *James*, 91.

¹⁵⁷ Burchard, *Der Jakobusbrief*, 98.

¹⁵⁸ Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 101.

¹⁵⁹ Richardson, *James*, 110f.

¹⁶⁰ Moo, *The Letter of James*, 103.

only that this is e.g. ‘the assembly of the readers’,¹⁶¹ or they simply do not reflect upon what nature the assembly has except that it is Christian.¹⁶²

Since the addressees of the Epistle of James are Christians of both Jewish and Gentile origin, and the text of v. 2 says συναγωγὴν ὑμῶν, ‘your assembly’, I find it reasonable that the nature of this assembly is a worship service. To gather for worship was probably the most common nature of a meeting among the Christians of the first century. Therefore when ‘your assembly’ meets, it normally was for worship.

Having established that the nature of the gathering in Jas 2:2–4 was most likely a worship service in a Christian assembly, it is worth asking what role such an assembly had in Roman civic life.

Cultural Texture of the Assembly (v. 2)

It has been argued that the Christian assemblies could be understood as voluntary associations in the Roman Empire.¹⁶³ This is a relevant point of departure for an understanding of the role of the Christian assemblies in a Roman city. They were part of the city and the city life and could at the same time be understood as somewhat of a sub-culture. As I have shown in chapter four a very rough division of focal points for civic life can be: *salutatio ceremonies; politics and government; the imperial cult, theatre, circus, public games and public baths; voluntary associations* and, finally, *the market place*. All these focal points were places where rank, status, honour or dishonour, and wealth or poverty were displayed. Garments would display either high rank, low rank or a position anywhere in-between. The *toga* and *tunica* would indicate wealth, formal rank, or more specifically

¹⁶¹ Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, 27.

¹⁶² See e.g. Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, 105f; Maier, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 107.

¹⁶³ See e.g. Wayne O. McCready, “Ekklesia and Voluntary Associations,” in *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen G. Wilson (London: Routledge, 1996), 61–63; Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 77–80; This view is implicit in Reicke as well, see Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, 27. There were three main groups of associations: a) linked to the household, b) formed around common trade and finally, c) formed around the cult of a deity, see chapter four and Kloppenborg, “Collegia and *Thiasoi*” 26. If one consider the Christian assemblies to be understood as associations, the latter is the most relevant. However, a relatively recent study of associations, synagogues and congregations by Philip A. Harland argues that the Roman associations can help us “comprehend the place of Jews and Christians within society in Roman Asia Minor”, although the Christian assemblies and the Jewish synagogues should not themselves be understood as Roman associations. See Philip A. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 177–237 and 265–269.

a role in the government. Likewise, filthy or dirty garments or lack of garments would indicate extreme poverty and low status. A person of high rank was a person whom one should honour and he or she was honoured e.g. through seating arrangements. On the other hand, a person of low rank, a poor person or a beggar, was a dishonourable person and he or she could be dishonoured, e.g. through seating arrangements.

The focal points of civic life were also arenas for political networking. They were arenas for political debate, and they were arenas for gathering support for candidates through benefactions and through maintaining and obtaining new clients. From this perspective, the voluntary associations were significant for patrons and candidates for political offices, even though the candidate himself was not a member of the specific voluntary association. A member of the elite could be observed among persons of lower rank e.g. in a voluntary association, if this was for political reasons, simply to gather votes or other forms of support. During the Empire, the elections were more or less for 'show'. Normally the emperor would either appoint a person to the office, or he would approve the list of candidates to an office, i.e. there would never be a candidate that the emperor did not endorse. Nevertheless it would be necessary for a candidate to collect votes, and to show that he had many clients. This would be done through visiting different associations, and through being generous towards members of these associations.¹⁶⁴ This was done mainly to show that the candidate had supporters and high status, since having many clients would give high status.

Cultural Texture of the Scenario of vv. 2–4

Given that this was a meeting for a Christian worship service, and given that the assembly in the context of a Roman city was understood to be a voluntary association, is the scenario painted for us in vv. 2–4 probable, possible, or unlikely? As I have said earlier, I am convinced that the persons entering the assembly are visitors. On an inner textual level the text portrays somewhat of an outsider/insider-situation. What do I mean by that? James specifically uses the pronoun 'you' about those who are part of the assembly. He says in v. 1: *you* cannot have faith in our Lord, the glorious Jesus Christ, and show partiality; v. 2: *your* assembly; v. 3: *you* look, and so on and so forth. The two persons entering the assembly are

¹⁶⁴ Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, 27.

not included in this 'you'. Hence, they are not part of the assembly, they are visitors.

The question now is: was it or was it not possible that an equestrian would visit a Christian assembly?¹⁶⁵ I hold that it was possible that an equestrian could visit a Christian assembly. Was such a visit probable? Yes, not only was it possible, but it was probable. Why? First, in general an equestrian would be very rich.¹⁶⁶ As a rich person, he would be considered to be a patron, and patrons had clients. The more clients a patron had, the more status and honour he had in society.¹⁶⁷ He would maintain the number of clients by being generous. Part of this generosity was very likely to be visits to his clients' voluntary associations, the Christian community being seen as one of them.¹⁶⁸ Second, a more specific argument is that an equestrian with political ambitions would need many clients because the number of clients he had would indicate his potential power. Many clients would secure election, and if he was a candidate for an electoral office, he definitely would have to pay attention to his clients to secure election. This is probably exactly what the equestrian we are meeting in James 2 is doing.¹⁶⁹ He is a candidate, which is indicated clearly by his clothing, hence he has a need for following up, paying attention to and 'warming up' his clients. The assembly in James 2 is part of his client base.

In other words, if the nature of the gathering is one of a worship service, the *ratio* of vv. 2–4 in the form of a conditional sentence is realistic and has its background in a real-life situation, hence the conditional sentence is likely to occur. It is probable, not only possible, and certainly not hypothetical. It should be understood as probable and likely to occur both on a logical inner textual level and against the background of cultural intertexture.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁵ The equestrian, and not the beggar, shall be my focus now, due to the following reason. Normally scholars do not question whether it would be realistic for a beggar to visit a Christian assembly. However, an equestrian visit is perceived to be so rare that one would naturally have to question the realism in such a visit.

¹⁶⁶ The equestrian census was 400,000 sesterces, and that made equestrians rich per se. See the section 'Gold rings' in chapter four.

¹⁶⁷ See the section '*Salutatio* ceremonies and inscriptions' in chapter four.

¹⁶⁸ In agreement with Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, 27.

¹⁶⁹ I am here agreeing with Reicke, though he has identified the ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος as a senator, see *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ Although Hartin does not reflect much upon the conditional sentence, he does reflect upon the rhetorical function of the *ratio*. He is of the opinion that the illustration has its background from a specific life-situation of the community, but moreover, he says that "the rhetorical function of this illustration is important. It aims at providing

Inner Texture of v. 4

As I have mentioned before, v. 4 forms an inclusio-structure with v. 1. V. 4 is also the *apodosis* to vv. 2–3. In addition v. 4 is a rhetorical question. Vv. 5–7 continue with rhetorical questions. Thus v. 4 forms a bridge between the *ratio* and the *confirmatio* of Jas 2:1–13, as it opens the series of rhetorical questions set forth in vv. 5–7. In this context, what does v. 4 mean?

Οὐ διεκρίθητε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς καὶ ἐγένεσθε κριταὶ διαλογισμῶν πονηρῶν;

have you not then wavered among yourselves and become evil-thinking judges?

There are three linguistic keys to an understanding of this verse. First, the translation of διεκρίθητε, second the prepositional addition ἐν ἑαυτοῖς, and third the understanding of the phrase κριταὶ διαλογισμῶν πονηρῶν. Before I look further at these keys, I shall introduce some interpretative reflections tied to the background of inner texture.

V. 4 is not only the *apodosis* of the conditional sentence, but also part of an inclusio-structure between vv. 1 and 4. Therefore the interpretation of it should not only be linked to the rest of the conditional sentence, but should also be closely linked to the first part of the inclusio, namely the *propositio* in v. 1. By showing partiality on the basis of rank, the addressees are actually also passing value judgements on persons on the basis of their rank in society. According to the *propositio* one cannot have faith and at the same time do just that. Hence, through showing partiality the assemblies are wavering in their relation to God. If they are Christians, they are all brothers, cf. the use of ἀδελφοί in the letter, and accordingly should treat each other equally and not pass judgement against one another. Later in the Epistle the neighbour-love is written about explicitly, and although the equestrian and the πτωχός probably were not part of the assembly, they would still be considered ‘neighbours’ and hence should be treated equally.

On an inner textual level, v. 4 also begins a series of rhetorical questions ending in v. 7, thus an interpretation of v. 4 should also keep in mind the whole series of rhetorical questions:

an example of partiality or discrimination for the hearers/readers so shocking that they will spontaneously agree that such action runs counter to the ethical way of life inspired by Jesus”, see Hartin, *James*, 131. Mussner might be of the same opinion when calling the example a “krass wirkendes Beispiel”, see Mussner, *Der Jakobusbrief*, 116.

⁵ Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters! Has not God chosen the absolute poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? ⁶ But you have dishonoured the beggar. Is it not the rich who oppress you, and are they not the ones who pull you into the courts of justice? ⁷ Is it not they who revile the good name that has been invoked over you?

The rest of the rhetorical questions are in utter contrast to the acts of the assembly and to them as evil-thinking judges: God has chosen the absolute poor, but the assembly dishonours them. The wealthy exploit the Christians and drag them into the courts, nevertheless, the Christians honour one wealthy person. The wealthy blaspheme against Christ, nevertheless, the Christians honour a representative of the wealthy.

Intertexture of διακρίθητε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς (v. 4)

Let me start with investigating the expression διακρίθητε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς. The verb is an aorist 2nd plural of διακρίνω and the prepositional addition is a reflexive pronoun, masculine plural. Main translations of the word according to *LSJ* are: to separate one from another, distinguish or decide (of judges).¹⁷¹ Friedrich Büchsel argues that the main meaning of διακρίνω in the New Testament is ‘to distinguish’, however in Jas 1:6 and 2:4, as well as in Mark 11:23; Matt 21:21; Rom 4:20 and Acts 10:20, the meaning is more likely to be ‘to doubt’.¹⁷² Concerning Jas 2:4, Büchsel says:

In Jas 2:4 διακριθῆναι is to go to the assembly and thus to demonstrate one’s faith, and yet at the same time to despise the poor, acting according to the standards of the world and not according to the promise which God has given the poor (v. 5). The inconsistency of this is sin.¹⁷³

This understanding of διακρίνω in Jas 2:4 is interesting against the background of the rest of my interpretation of Jas 2:2–4. The whole point there is that the assembly is acting wrongly according to God’s standards but rightly according to Roman standards. Instead of trusting God they trust

¹⁷¹ Liddell, Scott, and Jones, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 399.

¹⁷² Friedrich Büchsel, “κρίνω κτλ.” in TDNT, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, vol. III, 921–954, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 947. Dibelius argues quite thoroughly against this view, see Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 169f.

¹⁷³ Büchsel, “κρίνω κτλ.” 948. Danker lists six main understandings of διακρίνω and puts Jas 2:4 as a witness to two of these. The first is to make a distinction or to differentiate (Danker’s second main understanding of the word). The second is to be uncertain, to be at odds with oneself, to doubt or to waver (Danker’s sixth main understanding of the word), see Danker, ed. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 231. To waver seems to me in the context of James 2 to be a somewhat better translation than to doubt.

the Roman cultural etiquette. They waver between God and the world. In that sense they are double-minded, cf. Jas 1:6–8. I agree with Büchsel's reflections around διακριθῆναι in Jas 2:4; however, a better translation into English than 'doubt' would be 'waver'. The actions of the assembly in Jas 2:2–3 have consequences because by acting according to Roman etiquette the members of the assembly waver in their relation to God, and v. 4 should be translated: "have you not then wavered among yourselves, and become evil-thinking judges?" This translation of διακρίνω does not have as a consequence that the two men entering the assembly are included in the reflexive pronoun. The 'yourselves' only refers to the assembly.

As far as I have found out, most interpreters however, do not understand διακρίνω as 'to doubt' or 'to waver'. They rather understand διακρίνω as 'to divide',¹⁷⁴ 'to distinguish/to make distinctions'¹⁷⁵ or 'to discriminate'.¹⁷⁶ This normally has as a consequence that the equestrian and the beggar are included in the reflexive pronoun and in other words are seen as included in the assembly. Laws, however, understands the reflexive pronoun slightly differently. She translates "make distinctions in your own minds", and says that διεκρίθητε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς "should be taken as having a middle force, for it is the personal, internal dividedness that is the target of James's attack".¹⁷⁷ Although 'distinctions in your own minds', 'to waver' and 'to doubt' can possibly be understood as similar ideas, I am not quite convinced by Laws' translation here.¹⁷⁸ Nor am I convinced by the majority of interpreters who translate 'to distinguish', and I shall therefore stick with 'to waver' as a translation. The main point is that the members of the assembly by their actions show a different relation to God than one would expect from their faith. They put their trust in somebody else than God, thus they waver.

¹⁷⁴ Johnson, *The Letter of James*, 220, 223.

¹⁷⁵ See e.g. Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 170; Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, 26; Hartin, *James*, 116, 118, 132; Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, 101; Mussner, *Der Jakobusbrief*, 119; Wachob, *The voice of Jesus in the social rhetoric of James*, 71.

¹⁷⁶ See e.g. Moo, *The Letter of James*. In Moo's translation on p. 99 he uses 'to discriminate', however in his exegesis on p. 104 it seems that he prefers the translation 'to doubt'.

¹⁷⁷ Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 102.

¹⁷⁸ However, it might be possible to argue, though not on grammatical premises, that διακρίνω can be translated 'to distinguish' in Jas 2:4, and therefore the meaning should be understood as follows: when the assembly shows partiality towards visitors, they also in effect are making distinctions among themselves. If they are showing partiality even though the objects of this partiality are not part of the assembly, they are actually distinguishing among themselves. By judging the two visitors they are actually judging themselves.

The first part of v. 4 shows that the members of the assembly, through their actions, are wavering among themselves. The second part shows the effect of this wavering: they have become evil-thinking judges, *κριται διαλογισμῶν πονηρῶν*.

Intertexture of κριται διαλογισμῶν πονηρῶν (v. 4)

In this particular context I assume that the rabbinical teaching which Roy Bowen Ward referred to is relevant despite his failure of designating the whole verse as a reference to a judicial assembly. Thus Lev 19:15 is relevant:

Hebrew:¹⁷⁹

לֹא־תַעֲשׂוּ עֹל בְּמִשְׁפָּט לֹא־תִשָּׂא פָנֶיךָ לְלֹא תִהְיֶה דָן
גְּדוֹל בְּצָדִק תִּשְׁפֹּט עִמִּיתִי:

LXX:¹⁸⁰

Οὐ ποιήσετε ἄδικον ἐν κρίσει· οὐ λήμψῃ πρόσωπον πτωχοῦ οὐδὲ θαυμάσεις πρόσωπον δυνάστου, ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ κρινεῖς τὸν πλησίον σου

NRSV:

You shall not render an unjust judgement; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbour.

Since Jas 2:8 is an explicit citation of Lev 19:18, it is justified to regard Lev 19:15 as a background for Jas 2:4 even though the nature of the assembly is not judicial. The issue at hand in James is as we know partial acts in the assembly. In Lev 19:15 partiality in judgement constitute these partial acts.¹⁸¹ In other words, the issues are analogous. When v. 4 ends up with

¹⁷⁹ The Hebrew text is taken from K. Elliger and W. Rudolph, eds., *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1990).

¹⁸⁰ The Hebrew text and the LXX text are congruent. The text of the LXX is taken from A. Rahlfs, ed. *Septuaginta* (Stuttgart: 1935).

¹⁸¹ Contextually Leviticus 19 is very significant in the Holiness Code, Leviticus 17–26. Walter Brueggemann says that there are two distinct ways in Leviticus that the responsibility of the priests is articulated; “[I]n chapters 1–16, holiness is situated in the cult; in chapters 17–26, holiness pertains in larger scope to the promised land”, see Walter Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 68. Leviticus 17–26 is called the Holiness Code, according to Brueggemann, much due to Lev 19:2b: “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.” See Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination*, 71. In other words, Leviticus 19 is central to the whole context of Leviticus 17–26 and it seems that the chapter “is a vision of communal welfare in Israel”. See Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination*, 72. In this communal welfare, the love commandment is significant, so is righteousness in judging. The issue of just and unjust judgement is significant in the Torah, in the

an accusation of being evil-thinking¹⁸² judges, we can infer on the basis of Lev 19:15 that they are accused of being unrighteous judges or unjust judges.¹⁸³ In other words, the partial acts of vv. 2–3 are just as bad as being a partial judge, i.e. an unjust judge. The unrighteousness of the unjust judges is against God's Law, hence partial treatment of persons in general is against God's Law.¹⁸⁴

From their Jewish-Christian background the members of the assembly knew the theology concerning just and unjust judges in the Old Testament. Lev 19:15 was central in this theology and they should be familiar with this and other texts about the issue. Thus a contrast between what is right and what is wrong becomes even more evident to them. The teaching about right and wrong from their Jewish-Christian background is in utter contrast with their actual life in a Roman cultural context.¹⁸⁵ By showing partiality, i.e. by following the Roman etiquette, they have become no better than judges making partial judgements, i.e. unrighteous judges or evil judges. The Torah and later the rabbinical teaching strongly warn against this. Their acts of partiality are obviously disobedient to the Law of God, or the royal Law (see Jas 2:8). The issue of unjust judges is also found in Luke 18:1–8. From this text it seems that the unjust judge is unjust because he neither fears God nor has respect for people. Seen together with Lev 19:15 one may conclude that an unjust judge is unjust because he does not fear God or humans, and the unjust judgements he gives are unjust because they are partial and unrighteous.

V. 4 presents a strong accusation against the assembly. It might even be a condemning accusation. They are just doing the correct and respectful thing to do, given a situation with an equestrian and a beggar. But James is telling them that this is against their Jewish-Christian cultural and

prophets and in Proverbia. See e.g. Prov 8:16; 24:23–29; 31:9; Isa 11:4–5; Jer 21:12; Zech 7:9–10. A just judge is impartial.

¹⁸² Διαλογισμός normally has a negative echo in the NT. It is often used about negative or evil thoughts or considerations, see Gerd Petzke, "διαλογισμός" in EDNT, ed. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, vol. 1, 308, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 308.

¹⁸³ In agreement with Laws, who actually translates *κριταὶ διαλογισμῶν πονηρῶν* as 'unjust judges', see Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 102. Laws also comes to this conclusion through a parallel reading of Jas 2:4 and Lev 19:15. Hartin presents the same reading, see Hartin, *James*, 132f.

¹⁸⁴ Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 102. Moo has a similar approach to this verse. He says: "When Christians show favoritism toward people in the assembly, they implicitly claim God's own right to stand in judgment over other people." See Moo, *The Letter of James*, 105.

¹⁸⁵ Hartin, *James*, 132f.

religious background. He tells them to act totally differently, to oppose the Roman etiquette and to show as much honour to a beggar as to an equestrian.¹⁸⁶ For the equestrian this would most likely be interpreted as disrespect against him, a representative of the Roman administration.¹⁸⁷ James' argument against partiality is at the same time in effect a criticism of the Roman culture. His argument is counter-cultural.¹⁸⁸

We have now seen that vv. 1 and 4 form an inclusio-structure within the unit 1–4. V. 1 is the admonition given to the addressees. Vv. 2–3 show an example where the addressees act in total opposition to the admonition, and v. 4 condemns their actions in a harsh way and shows that their partiality is in conflict with God's Law.

Summary of vv. 2–4

The *ratio* of Jas 2:1–13 is formed as a conditional sentence. I have shown that this is a conditional sentence of the type of *eventualis*, 'generell-prospektiver Fall', and that the relation between the *protasis* and the

¹⁸⁶ Although Sharon H. Ringe has identified the ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος simply as a rich man, and the πτωχός simply as a poor man she makes a similar argument at this point. She says that "the members of the church [...] have been 'colonized' by the values and ideology of the surrounding society. The author thus speaks with a postcolonial voice in the sense of a counter-weight to those values and that ideology, in the name of the divine option for the poor (2.5) and true faith (*pistis*, 2.1)." See Ringe, "The Letter of James" 373–374.

¹⁸⁷ As I have shown in chapter four, status and rank, honour and shame were extremely central to Roman life. The Roman etiquette was that honour was shown according to rank. Persons were honoured through *salutatio* ceremonies, inscriptions and not least through seating arrangements. Persons of high rank were given honourable seating, and likewise, persons of low rank were given less honourable seating. The group of the πτωχοί clearly belonged to the persons of low rank and should thus be given less honourable seating. An equestrian, on the other hand, was a person of high rank and should thus be given an honourable seat. If either an equestrian was given a seat of less honour or a πτωχός was given a seat equally honourable to the seat of the equestrian, both would be an act of dishonour towards the equestrian. It was simply unconceivable. And thus, when the author of the Epistle of James says that this Roman partiality is incompatible with Christian faith, this is an extremely radical message.

¹⁸⁸ In agreement with Hartin, *James*, 146: "James singles out the value or virtue of 'not showing acts of favoritism' (2:1). Immediately the countercultural nature of the way of life of Jesus and his followers comes to the fore. Mediterranean society was based on patron-client relationships in which 'acts of favoritism' were a prerequisite for success and survival. Contrary to the wider society, James is showing that in the voluntary association that is their community the core value is that of equality: all people are made in God's likeness (3:9). The consequence is that all must be treated equally with honor and dignity." This is also in agreement with Martin Hengel when he holds that the Christian movement was critical towards social differences, see Hengel, *Eigentum und Reichtum in der frühen Kirche: Aspekte einer frühchristlichen Sozialgeschichte*, 54, and the section on Martin Hengel in chapter three.

apodosis probably is evidence-inference. This type of conditional sentence indicates that the events described can possibly occur, i.e. there is from a strictly grammatical point of view possibly a reality link. I have concluded that the conditional sentence of the *ratio* should be understood as something possible and something that one should count on given certain circumstances. The question then is whether these certain circumstances are probable? I found from an inner textual perspective that if the *ratio* is unlikely, there is no need for the *propositio*. I have also found that the two persons of the *ratio* are an equestrian seeking political office, and a beggar. The nature of the gathering is a worship service of the Christian assembly. The Christian assemblies were most likely understood as voluntary associations within the Roman cities. As such they would be places to visit for patrons and for persons running for political office. A patron would visit them because he was taking care of his clients. A candidate for political office would visit them to gather support. Against this background I have concluded that the circumstances described in vv. 2–4 are possible and probable, and every time the assembly acted as in the example in vv. 2–3, the consequence would be that they had wavered and become evil-thinking judges. Against the background of Lev 19:15 I found that this might mean that they were unrighteous and unjust. This is a very strong and harsh accusation against the assembly.

The problem of Jas 2:2–4 is that the assembly is following Roman cultural etiquette when confronted with both an equestrian and a beggar as visitors. They treat them according to the Roman cultural etiquette where the equestrian has the right to an honourable seat in the front, and where the beggar is among the lowest in rank and thus is given a shameful seating arrangement. This is against James' teaching about the group of the absolute poor, the *πτωχοί*. The *πτωχοί* are significant in the Epistle of James. They are portrayed as the humble (*ταπεινοί*) in Jas 1:9f and 4:6.10, as the orphans (*ὀρφανοί*) and widows (*χήραι*) in Jas 1:27, as the naked (*γυμνοί*) and those lacking daily food (*λειπόμενοι τῆς ἐφημέρου τροφῆς*) in Jas 2:14–17 and as the suffering (*κακοπαθέω*) in Jas 5:3. To treat the *πτωχοί* well is for James a sign of faith. Hence, the assembly is acting against the teaching of James and the accusation of vv. 2–4 is harsh. The assembly is following Rome as a centre instead of following their own Christian faith.

From a postcolonial perspective, we have again seen that the binaries of coloniser—colonised, power—powerless and centre—margin are central to the situation in vv. 2–4. The equestrian that is portrayed in these verses, represent a specific imperial presence. When the assembly meets him, it is clear that their identities are hybrid, and they automatically act

according to Roman cultural etiquette. They should however have acted according to their Christian faith and treated the beggar and the equestrian equally. The main problem for the author of the Epistle of James seems to be the consequences of their hybridity.

VERSES 5–7—CONFIRMATIO

⁵ Ἀκούσατε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί· οὐχ ὁ θεὸς ἐξελέξατο τοὺς πτωχοὺς τῷ κόσμῳ πλουσίους ἐν πίστει καὶ κληρονόμους τῆς βασιλείας ἧς ἐπηγγείλατο τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν; ⁶ ὅμως δὲ ἡτιμάσατε τὸν πτωχόν. οὐχ οἱ πλούσιοι καταδυναστεύουσιν ὑμῶν καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔλκουσιν ὑμᾶς εἰς κριτήρια; ⁷ οὐκ αὐτοὶ βλασφημοῦσιν τὸ καλὸν ὄνομα τὸ ἐπικληθὲν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς;

⁵ Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters! Has not God chosen the absolute poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? ⁶ But you have dishonoured the beggar. Is it not the rich who oppress you, and are they not the ones who pull you into the courts of justice? ⁷ Is it not they who revile the good name that has been invoked over you?

Inner Texture

The *topos* of partiality is repeated in this next part of the textual unit, the *confirmatio*. The *confirmatio* of vv. 5–7 provides additional arguments supporting the *propositio*. These arguments come in the form of one statement about the addressees, and three rhetorical questions demanding a confirmative answer. These three rhetorical questions intensify the accusation of partiality from vv. 1–4. They also substantiate the contrast between the real-life actions of the addressees and the religious background on which they should act and are to be judged. The rhetorical questions are put in a way that makes it obvious that the addressees already know the correct answers, hence, their wrongdoings become even more surprising. It is clear that they know the set of religious rules by which they should act, but still they act from a different set of rules, i.e. the Roman cultural etiquette which in this particular case is political rather than religious.

V. 5 is introduced by an imperative, ‘Listen!’ This signals the importance of the coming part of the textual unit in a similar way as in the Law (e.g. Deut 6:3), in the prophets (e.g. Amos 3:1; Isa 1:10) and in wisdom literature (e.g. Ps 119:149; Prov 1:8).¹⁸⁹ In addition the address is similar to v. 1: ἀδελφοί

¹⁸⁹ Johnson, *The Letter of James*, 224; Moo, *The Letter of James*, 105.

μου ἀγαπητοί—my beloved brothers. This indicates an even stronger connection between James and the recipients than ἀδελφοί μου in v. 1 did. On a structural level James intensifies the impression of a bond between himself and his addressees. It also strengthens the impression that he does not want to cut the addressees off, but to guide them towards a proper Christian behaviour. As I showed in the interpretation of v. 1, the use of ἀδελφοί in James is on several occasions specifically linked to the structure and rhetoric of the Epistle. Often the word is used when a particularly important unit is coming up. In Jas 2:1–13 this is very clear,¹⁹⁰ and v. 5 introduces a specifically important unit as it echoes the Jesus tradition.¹⁹¹

Let me have a look at the first rhetorical question:

Οὐχ ὁ θεὸς ἐξελέξατο τοὺς πτωχοὺς τῷ κόσμῳ πλουσίους ἐν πίστει καὶ κληρονόμους τῆς βασιλείας ἣς ἐπηγγείλατο τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν;

Has not God chosen the absolute poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom that he has promised to those who love him?

This question resonates with Old Testament theology about the chosen people and about being elected by God, as well as with Jesus' teaching about the absolute poor as the elect. Let me first examine two central phrases, namely ἐκλέγομαι and κληρονόμος τῆς βασιλείας.¹⁹²

Intertexture of ἐκλέγομαι and κληρονόμος τῆς βασιλείας (v. 5)

In a Jewish-Christian religious context to be elected was strongly connected with the very central elements of faith:

- the election of the fathers by God (Acts 13:17) and the subsequent self-understanding as God's chosen people.¹⁹³
- the election of Jesus as Son of God, Luke 9:35.
- that the elect had a significant role in salvation history, through Israel, as indicated by Acts 13:17, and then through Jesus "in whom the OT promises about the messianic Son of God (Ps 2:7), the elect suffering

¹⁹⁰ In agreement with Moo, see Moo, *The Letter of James*, 105.

¹⁹¹ A significant contribution regarding the Jesus tradition of Jas 2:5 is Wachob, see Wachob, *The voice of Jesus in the social rhetoric of James*. See especially pp. 135–153. See in addition my presentation of Wachob in chapter three.

¹⁹² In Jas 2:5 the poor are the chosen to be heirs of the kingdom that "he has promised to those who love him" (ἣς ἐπηγγείλατο τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν). In this context I understand 'those who love him' and 'the rich in faith' as parallel terms.

¹⁹³ See e.g. Deut 4:37; 7:7; 10:15; 14:2. Johnson, *The Letter of James*, 224.

- servant of God (Isa 42:1), and the prophet like Moses (Deut 18:15) are fulfilled".¹⁹⁴
- the poor as chosen by God, see 1 Cor 1:26ff, the beatitudes in Matthew and Luke and the parable about the great banquet in Luke 14:15–24 with parallel in Matt 22:1–10.¹⁹⁵

To be chosen by God and to be heirs of the Kingdom of God are in the New Testament two sides of the same coin. We can see this e.g. in the parable about the vineyard and the tenants in Matt 21:33–46 with parallels in Mark 12:1–12 and Luke 20:9–19. In this parable, the heir is the son, i.e. Jesus. In Rom 8:17 the believers in Christ are called 'joint heirs with Christ', so when Christ is the heir of the Kingdom of God, so are his believers.

In the parable about the vineyard and the tenants as represented in Mark 12:1–12 and Luke 20:9–19 it is implicit that the inheritance is the Kingdom of God. It is quite clear in Jas 2:5 that the inheritance that the absolute poor are going to receive is the Kingdom of God. In the parable about the vineyard and the tenants the inheritance, i.e. the Kingdom of God, has been taken away from the original heirs, and given to new heirs, i.e. those who believe in Christ (Mark 12:9 and parallels). They are the ones elected to be heirs of the Kingdom.

In the beatitudes in Matt 5:3–12 with parallel in Luke 6:20–23, the combination of being elected and heirs of God's Kingdom is also significant, as it is in Matt 25:34. In the same way as in Jas 2:5, the beatitudes are especially clear on the point that the poor are the elect. One might say that there is a direct contrast to this point in Jesus' conversation with the rich man in Mark 10:17–31 with parallels in Matt 19:16–26 and Luke 18:18–30. The point here is that wealth is an obstacle with regard to inheriting the Kingdom of God. It seems that if you are wealthy, faith in God is difficult, hence, it is difficult to inherit the Kingdom of God.

Often when κληρονόμος or the verb κληρονομέω is used elsewhere in the New Testament, the allusion to the promised inheritance is there in the background, see e.g. 1 Cor 6:9; Gal 4:1, 30; 5:21; Heb 12:17. In the New Testament this inheritance is normally understood as an eschatological

¹⁹⁴ Jost Eckert, "ἐκλέγομαι" in EDNT, ed. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, vol. 1, 416–417, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 416.

¹⁹⁵ Paul's teaching in 1 Cor 1:26ff on how God chose what is foolish, weak, low and despised in the world seems to be, although Paul does not say so explicitly, about how God has chosen the absolute poor. My interpretation of the word πτωχός in vv. 2–4 shows that the ones whom Paul mentions in 1 Cor 1:26ff are all representatives of the group of the πτωχοί.

kingdom. In the Old Testament, however, the promised inheritance was predominantly understood as the Promised Land, see e.g. Exod 32:13; Num 26:52–56.¹⁹⁶

In the beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount and in the Sermon on the Plain it is not the noun that is used, but the verb *κληρονομέω*, and the subject matter is the same: the Kingdom of God belongs to the absolute poor.¹⁹⁷ The whole rhetorical question of v. 5 would, against a Jewish-Christian background, echo very strongly with Jesus' preaching from the Sermon on the Mount/Plain, Matt 5:2–12/Luke 6:20–23.¹⁹⁸ In Luke 6:20 we read:

Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοί, ὅτι ὑμετέρα ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ.

Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

In Matt 5:3 we read:

Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Again we see that the ideas of being chosen by God and to be heirs of his Kingdom are the same.

The teaching regarding the condition of being chosen (*ἐκλέγομαι*) and being heirs of the Kingdom (*κληρονόμος τῆς βασιλείας*) would be well known by the recipients of the Epistle of James. The teaching came from the centre of their faith, namely from Jesus Christ himself. The answer to the rhetorical question of v. 5 is obviously 'yes', and the persons of the assembly know this from the very core of their faith. Yet, the author of the Epistle finds it necessary to ask the question. Not only that, he also makes the statement of v. 6a that the assembly has dishonoured the poor. They know Jesus' teaching about the poor, yet they dishonour them. Through vv. 5 and 6 the admonition of v. 1 is sharpened further. The partiality that the assembly is warned against is very much against their own faith and their actions are therefore in conflict with their own faith.

¹⁹⁶ Johannes Friedrich, "κληρονόμος" in EDNT, ed. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, vol. 2, 298–299, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 298f.

¹⁹⁷ Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 103f; Hartin, *James*, 133.

¹⁹⁸ Wachob is of the opinion that Jas 2:5 "alludes to a saying of Jesus that is performed in four other early Christian texts: Matt 5:3; Luke 6.20b; *Gos. Thom.* 54; and *Pol. Phil.* 2.3", see Wachob, *The voice of Jesus in the social rhetoric of James*, 138.

Intertexture of οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ κόσμῳ (v. 5)

I have now shown that both to be chosen (ἐκλέγομαι) and to be heirs of the Kingdom (κληρονόμος τῆς βασιλείας) are ideas that have a clear Jewish-Christian background, that they represent central teaching from Jesus that we can find in the Sermon on the Mount/Plain and in the parables, and that these ideas are linked together. What about the absolute poor in the world: οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ κόσμῳ? How are we to understand this phrase?¹⁹⁹

Again an important background is found in the Sermon on the Mount/Plain, but initially I would say that there is a difference between the πτωχός in v. 2 and the πτωχοὶ in v. 5. As I have expressed earlier the plural πτωχοὶ should be understood as an expression referring to the whole group of the absolute poor, i.e. the ones living on subsistence level or under. πτωχός, however, is a term relating to a specific person within the wider group of the absolute poor, namely a beggar.

On an inner textual level, the fact that God has chosen the group of the absolute poor in the world to be rich in faith is an additional argument supporting the *propositio* of the text. If the group represents the chosen, it does not make sense to treat one representative of the group badly. The interpretation of Jas 2:2–4 has shown that a beggar enters the assembly and is given a less prominent seat, thus he is being dishonoured. This action is fundamentally wrong. By acting like this the members of the assembly have become evil-thinking judges. Partiality is in contradiction to the Law, i.e. they have broken the Law. And now they are confronted with already known teaching from Jesus, namely that the poor, a representative of whom they have dishonoured, are chosen by God. The parallel to the Sermon on the Mount/Plain is again clear.

However, it does seem to me that the parallel is closer to Luke than to Matthew, i.e. to the Sermon on the Plain more than to the Sermon on the Mount, mainly because James, like Luke, does not qualify οἱ πτωχοὶ

¹⁹⁹ There are three alternative readings to NA²⁷. One adds ἐν, making the understanding of the dative somewhat more clear as a local understanding: 'the poor in the world'. The second and third alternatives to NA²⁷ do not give a dative at all, but a genitive: either τοῦ κόσμου or τοῦ κόσμου τούτου. The translation will then be 'the world's poor' or 'this world's poor'. I have argued that the text of NA²⁷ should not be changed. It has been suggested that τῷ κόσμῳ should be understood as a *dativus commodi*, see e.g. Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 171, who mentions this as one alternative understanding of the dative. A possible translation with this alternative would be 'poor in the eyes of the world', see Hartin, *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus*, 149. However, a better understanding of the dative seems to be local. My conclusion thus is that πτωχοὺς τῷ κόσμῳ should be translated as 'the poor in the world'.

with τῷ πνεύματι as Matthew does.²⁰⁰ In other words the qualification of οἱ πτωχοί with τῷ κόσμῳ is closer to Luke's plain οἱ πτωχοί. One can ask: what is the subject matter of being poor in the world? The answer is found in what I have written about the group of the absolute poor. They are the poorest of the poor, living on the margins of society.²⁰¹ They have

²⁰⁰ In agreement with Hartin, *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus*, 149f. In his study Hartin has devoted one chapter to a closer examination of the parallels between James and the Sermon on the Mount/Plain. In this study Hartin has identified 29 specific correspondences between James and the Synoptic tradition, see Hartin, *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus*, 141f. See also my presentation of Hartin's chart of correspondences in the section 'Theological background' in chapter two. Five of these correspondences are found in Jas 2:5–13, and four of these five are from either the Sermon on the Mount or from both the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain. Hartin has reconstructed the Q Sermon on the Plain, depending on the Lucan order, see Hartin, *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus*, 144–148. Hartin finds 21 correspondences between James and the Matthean Sermon on the Mount and nine correspondences between James and the reconstructed version of Q depending on the Lucan order, see Hartin, *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus*, 144f. The correspondences both between the Matthean Sermon on the Mount and the reconstructed Q are found in each and every chapter of the Epistle of James. On a statistical level, this goes to show the importance of the teaching of Jesus for Jamesian theology. Moreover, according to Hartin, this also shows that James probably had access to several sources, both Q and later developments of Q, and just as Matthew and Luke can be seen as reflections and developments of the Jesus tradition recorded in Q, so can James, see Hartin, *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus*, 150, 161. Hartin also devotes a section to the relationship between James and the beatitudes, see Hartin, *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus*, 148–161. He finds direct correspondences between all the beatitudes in Matthew, except 5:5 and 5:10, and James, and there are correspondences to the beatitudes in every single chapter of James. Of these correspondences, three are from James 2. Jas 2:5 corresponds to the beatitude of the poor in Matt 5:3 and Luke 6:20, Jas 2:13 corresponds to the beatitude of those who are merciful in Matt 5:7 and Luke 6:36, and Jas 2:15–16 corresponds to the beatitude of those who hunger in Luke 6:21 and Matt 5:6, see Hartin, *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus*, 149–151, 152–154, 157–158. Wachob, on the other hand, seems to disagree with this point of view. He argues, on the basis of recent research on Q, that the Jesus saying echoed in Jas 2:5 is a very early one, and that "the Intertextuality of Jas 2.5 reflects more closely the saying in Q^{Matt} 5.3 than the sayings in Q^{Luke} 6.20b, *Gos. Thom.* 54, and *Pol. Phil.* 2.3", see Wachob, *The voice of Jesus in the social rhetoric of James*, 152, in addition to my presentation of Wachob in chapter three. Laws seems to take a middle position, see Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 103: "James seems to take a middle course between the Matthean and Lukan versions of Jesus' promise of the kingdom to the poor. He neither spiritualises the idea of poverty as Matthew does (Matt. v. 3), for his poverty is literal poverty, but nor does he show poverty as rewarded *per se* as Luke appears to do (Lk. vi. 20, and the rewarding of Lazarus in xvi. 19–25 apparently only because of his misfortunes; cf. on i. 1)."

²⁰¹ I have distinguished between the group of the absolute poor in Jas 2:5 (οἱ πτωχοί) and a beggar (ὁ πτωχός) in Jas 2:2. It is however worth noting the role of the Jerusalem assembly, or part of it, in this context. In Rom 15:26 Paul calls them 'the poor among the saints at Jerusalem', οἱ πτωχοὶ τῶν ἁγίων τῶν ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ. I shall not touch upon the debate around the genitive construction here. My point is that the assembly that the author of James claims to be the leader of—since he writes under the pseudonym of James—is poor or at least part of the assembly is poor. There was an agreement between Paul, on the one hand, and James, Cephas and John (the pillars), on the other hand, that

lost their honour, they live on subsistence level or below, hence they are dependent on others for their livelihood. They are the marginalised in the world.²⁰²

Intertexture of πλούσιοι ἐν πίστει (v. 5)

According to Hartin, in a Graeco-Roman context the word πίστις should be understood as dependability or trust.²⁰³ Faith in other words is to trust a person. In the cultural intertexture of the Epistle of James, the idea of πίστις played an important role in the patron-client relationship:

From the perspective of the patron *pistis* meant “dependability.” The patron showed that he or she was dependable or trustworthy in giving what had

Paul could go to the Gentiles but in return had to collect money for the poor of the Jerusalem assembly, cf. Gal 2:9–10. When the author of the Epistle of James talks about the poor as a group, I am of the opinion that this is not restricted to the Jerusalem assembly. However, given the significance of the Jerusalem assembly in first-century Christianity, and given the fact that the author of James takes on the pseudonym of the leader of this very assembly, the rhetorical question of Jas 2:5 may also have given associations to the poor of the Jerusalem assembly, οἱ πτωχοὶ τῶν ἀγίων τῶν ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ. In addition, the author may have intended a double meaning when using the term. He may be talking both about the Jerusalem assembly, or part of it, and about the wider group of the absolute poor, as the elect and rich in faith.

²⁰² Edgar understands ‘the poor in the world’ to be the socially marginalised followers of Jesus. For this identification Jas 2:5 is central. Edgar observes that in this verse those chosen by God are designated in the following terms: ‘poor by the world’s standards’, ‘rich in faith’ and ‘inheritors of the kingdom, which he promised to those who love him’, see Edgar, *Has God not Chosen the Poor? The Social Setting of the Epistle of James*, 112. He further states that “‘rich in faith’ can be seen to refer to the extent of loyalty and commitment to God which marks those who are ‘poor by the world’s standards’. This depiction is strongly suggestive of the sense of absolute dependence upon God which was characteristic of the socially marginal followers of Jesus. That these are the ones who are to inherit the kingdom promised to those who love God strengthens this suggestion”, see Edgar, *Has God not Chosen the Poor? The Social Setting of the Epistle of James*, 113. From this, Edgar draws the conclusion that the πτωχοὶ, in James are the same πτωχοὶ, as the ones in the Jesus movement. They are the socially marginal followers of Jesus, wandering charismatics, who were totally dependent upon the support of the Christian communities they visited. The πτωχοὶ in James cannot from this point of view be understood as poor people by economic standards, who by coincidence came to a gathering of the congregation. The poverty itself is not the important feature in the text, rather the focus is on the connection to the followers of Jesus, and the addressees failed to see it. The ‘poor’ would be socially marginal teachers and authorities within early Christianity, and to dishonour them was a major sign of mistrust in God. For a further presentation of Edgar, see chapter three. I do not agree with Edgar’s identification of the poor in James 2; however, I agree with his main point, that the problem of James 2 is that the members of the assemblies are not putting their trust in God but in someone else. Edgar says a rich patron. I hold that he is not only rich but an equestrian running for office.

²⁰³ Hartin, *James*, 143. Cf. also Edgar as outlined above.

been promised. From the perspective of the client *pistis* meant that the client placed *trust* in the patron that he or she would carry out what was promised. It also captures the quality of the *loyalty* the client owed the patron for the gift.²⁰⁴

From this perspective a relevant understanding of πίστις in the New Testament is that Jesus is the dependable patron and the people putting their trust in him are his clients. It seems that James reformulates or reinterprets the beatitude from Luke 6:20 into the context of the addressees of the Epistle of James, and in doing so he adds πίστις, trust, as part of being the elect.²⁰⁵ This makes the contrast between the rhetorical question and the faith of the assembly, and between the rhetorical question and the *ratio* in vv. 2–4, even stronger. The problem as shown in the *ratio* is that the addressees by honouring the equestrian are actually having faith in or trusting a representative of the Empire rather than God. The group of the absolute poor, on the other hand, are chosen to be rich in trust towards God.²⁰⁶ Their πίστις is in direct contrast with the πίστις of the addressees of the Epistle. When we understand πίστις and ἀγάπη as parallel concepts in this context, the consequence is that the addressees instead of loving God, love or trust a representative of the Empire, whereas the absolute poor are the ones that love or trust God.

From the Old Testament background of πίστις we can observe some of the same meaning as from the Graeco-Roman background. Πίστις and trust are closely connected. The stem ימנ is used about a person's relation to God, and one of the group of meanings connected to this stem is 'trust'.²⁰⁷ According to Rudolf Bultmann, the stem ימנ corresponds to πιστεύειν in the LXX, and it "does in fact correspond to the Gk. πιστεύειν to the degree that both can mean 'to trust'".²⁰⁸ It can mean to put trust in God

²⁰⁴ Ibid., (italics by Hartin).

²⁰⁵ Wachob interprets 'rich in faith' as synonymous with 'loving God', as do I. He says, "I conclude therefore, that 'the rich in faith' and 'those who love God' are Jamesian references to 'the poor in spirit': 'the Pious Poor' who fulfil the Torah, as interpreted by Jesus and summarized in the love-command", see Wachob, *The voice of Jesus in the social rhetoric of James*, 153.

²⁰⁶ Edgar interprets πίστις in the same way, see Edgar, *Has God not Chosen the Poor? The Social Setting of the Epistle of James*, 113: "'rich in faith' can be seen to refer to the extent of loyalty and commitment to God which marks those who are 'poor by the world's standards'."

²⁰⁷ Artur Weiser, "πιστεύω κτλ." in TDNT, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, vol. VI, 182–196, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 183. Another group of meanings, according to Weiser, is 'fear'.

²⁰⁸ Rudolf Bultmann, "πιστεύω κτλ." in TDNT, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, vol. VI, 174–182 and 197–228, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 1968, 197.

(Gen 15:6; Deut 1:32).²⁰⁹ Bultmann also says that in the New Testament *πίστις* as trust is “especially prominent where the influence of the OT and Jewish tradition is strong”.²¹⁰ This is the case in the Epistle of James.

If we take a look at the entire rhetorical question in v. 5, it is clear that it is a direct reference to Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount/Plain. The parallel to the Sermon on the Plain is especially striking.²¹¹ The contrast between the poorest of the poor, and what they are elected to be—rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom—is practically the same in James as in the beatitude in the Sermon on the Plain in Luke 6:20.²¹² Jesus’ teaching, specifically from the Sermon on the Plain, represents an utter contrast to the actions of the assembly as shown in the *ratio* of Jas 2:1–13: The assembly treats the equestrian differently and better than the beggar. By doing that they are showing partiality. This, however, is against the teaching of Jesus, which one would take for granted that a Christian assembly would know. According to Jesus, God has elected the group of the absolute poor to be heirs of the Kingdom. The beggar is a representative of this group. God has also chosen the poor to be rich in faith. Against this background it is illogical to treat a beggar less honourably than an equestrian.

Additionally, the qualification of the poor as *πλούσιοι ἐν πίστει*, i.e. rich in trust in God, represents a further reflection by James on Jesus’ teaching from the Sermon on the Plain. The idea of the poor being rich in faith is prominent in Jesus’ teaching, not only in the Sermon on the Mount/Plain, but also other texts. Jesus’ teaching about how difficult it is for the rich to have faith stands in utter contrast to the poor as rich in faith. Let me have a look at some examples. First of all there is the story about the offering done by the widow in Mark 12:41–44 with parallel in Luke 21:1–4. The main point of this story is probably that the faith of the widow is much greater than the faith of any of the rich, even though the sum she is offering is far less than the sums that the rich are offering. However, she gives everything she has to the temple offering and through this it becomes clear that she is rich in faith. A different story is the one about the rich man in Mark 10:17–22 with parallels in Matt 19:16–22 and Luke 18:18–23. The point of this story is that the rich man lives by the Law, yet he asks Jesus what he has to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus’ answer seems

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 206.

²¹¹ In agreement with Hartin, *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus*, 149f.

²¹² Ibid., 149.

to be somewhat disappointing. He replies that the man has to sell everything he owns and give the money to the poor, an answer disappointing due to the man's wealth. This story represents the opposite to the idea of being rich in faith. It seems that wealth is portrayed as an obstacle to faith. The contrast between this rich man and the poor widow is enormous. Although she does not really have anything, the little she has, she gives to the temple. The rich man however is not able to give everything he has in the same way as the widow did. After the story about the rich man, Jesus comments on it by saying, "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" (Mark 10:23), and, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:25). This comment very strongly shows the contrast between the poor widow and the rich man.

In James the qualification of the poor as *πλούσιοι ἐν πίστει* becomes yet another contrast to the *ratio* in vv. 2–4: By their actions shown in the example in vv. 2–4, the assembly has clearly committed itself to a different *πίστις* than the absolute poor in v. 5 have done. *The assembly* is honouring the equestrian, putting their trust in him and as a consequence putting their trust in the Roman Empire, whereas the *poor* are putting their trust in God. This is exactly what the Christian assembly should have done, yet they are not doing it. Hence, the critique against the assembly is that they are putting their trust in an imperial patron instead of God, and by doing that they are dishonouring the very one that actually *is* putting his trust in God, the beggar.²¹³ They are wavering, cf. Jas 2:4.

The dishonouring of the beggar is explicitly referred to in v. 6a. V. 6a has the function of forming a bridge between v. 5 and vv. 6–7. V. 6a goes: *but you have dishonoured the beggar*. This refers to v. 3 where the addressees are accused of giving an honourable seat to the equestrian and letting the poor stand or sit under a footstool. With the honouring of the equestrian follows dishonouring of the beggar.²¹⁴ It is not the honouring of the equestrian that is the problem in James 2, but the dishonouring of the beggar.²¹⁵

²¹³ Their dishonouring is "an attitude contrary to that of God", see Moo, *The Letter of James*, 108.

²¹⁴ Dibelius argues on the basis of vv. 6–7 that partiality was a widespread phenomenon among the Christian assemblies, see Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 172.

²¹⁵ In agreement with Laws, see Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 104: "Similarly, the attitude of James to the rich is not here clear-cut. Despite the harsh reminder of v. 6b, the rich do not seem to be by definition enemies. There is no hint that the rich visitor to the meeting has no business to be there, nor that his visit is a hostile one, in contrast

The Greek word that is used for dishonouring is ἀτιμάζω. *BDAG* gives the meaning as: “deprive someone of honor or respect, to dishonor/shame, an especially grievous offence in the strongly honor-shame oriented Semitic and Gr-Rom. Societies”.²¹⁶ The same meaning is given in *LSJ* and *EDNT*, and in addition *LSJ* says that in a legal sense the word has the meaning of disfranchise.²¹⁷ I shall now examine the cultural intertexture of honour and shame as well as the intertexture of ἀτιμάζω.

Cultural Texture of ἀτιμάζω (v. 6a)

From first-century extra-biblical literary sources, it is clear that ἀτιμάζω was understood as insulting and disrespecting someone.²¹⁸ Hartin has investigated honour, shame, patronage and grace as cultural scripts behind the Epistle of James, and I acknowledge my dependence on him.²¹⁹ Dishonour or shame cannot be understood alone, one has to look at the juxtaposition of honour, shame, patronage and grace. These lie at the foundation of Graeco-Roman society.²²⁰ Generally one can say that honour and shame had to do with the value a person had in his or her own eyes as well as in the eyes of others. Hence, by honouring a person a value judgement was made, and likewise by dishonouring a person another value judgement was made. Persons would be honoured if for example they were significant benefactors, had high rank, i.e. were of the two first orders, and at the same time were considered to be of good will.²²¹ Honouring a person was a very visible act, very often done in the public or semi-public sphere of society.²²² According to Hartin, first-century Mediterranean society “was

to the poor man's; nor, strictly, is the welcoming manner of his reception condemned, but only the insulting manner of the beggar's.”

²¹⁶ See the article on ἀτιμάζω in Danker, ed. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 148f.

²¹⁷ Liddell, Scott, and Jones, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 270; Hans Hübner, “ἀτιμάζω κτλ.” in *EDNT*, ed. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 177.

²¹⁸ See e.g. “The Rhodian Oration” by Dio Chrysostomos in Dio Chrysostomos, *Discourses*, trans. J.W. Cohoon and H. Lamar Crosby, 1st ed., LCL, vol. III (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979; reprint, 3), 30f, specifically 31.27, and Philo, *De vita Mosis*, 2.20.1 and 2.58.5 in Philo, *Philo in ten volumes*, trans. F.H. Colson, 1st ed., LCL, vol. VI (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984; reprint, 4).

²¹⁹ See excursus 6 in Hartin, *James*, 140–148.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 140.

²²¹ Typical ways of honouring persons in the first century were through e.g. honorific inscriptions, *salutatio* ceremonies, honourable seating etc., see chapter four for a more thorough presentation of these.

²²² See the section ‘*Salutatio* ceremonies and inscriptions’ in chapter four.

oriented toward maintaining honor and avoiding dishonor".²²³ Malina has the same perspective on first-century Mediterranean society. He underlines that everything in this society was limited, even honour. This is his concept of 'limited good' through which he understands first-century Mediterranean society.²²⁴ If honour was limited, maintaining it became even more important, and according to Malina this created a situation of competition for all sorts of resources. When it came to status and rank, honour was the most valuable resource.

In the same way as honour was a public matter, so was dishonour and shame. In a society where public appearance was so utterly important, honour would strengthen the public appearance and shame would destroy it, hence destroy the value and worth a person had in his or her own eyes as well as in the eyes of the society.²²⁵ At the same time it is worth noting that honour and shame were specifically important within the group you belonged to. "The honor in which one is held by that particular group is what matters, not the way in which one is esteemed outside the group."²²⁶ That means that within the Christian community, the important matter concerning honour and shame would not necessarily be how the rest of the society valued you, but how you were valued within the Christian community. Hartin uses 1 Pet 2:11–12 as an example:

The Gentiles malign and ridicule Christians because their actions do not conform to what was identified as honorable in their society. Peter exhorts his hearers to remain true to the values they hold as honorable. In this way they bear witness among the wider society to their honorable character.²²⁷

In relation to Jas 2:6 this is very relevant. According to the cultural standards of Roman society, honouring the equestrian by giving him a prominent seat was not necessarily at the same time a dishonouring of the beggar. They were both given seating according to their status and rank in society. Hence, the beggar was not dishonoured according to Roman cultural standards. However, according to Jewish-Christian standards, the beggar was most definitely dishonoured. The Jewish-Christian teaching about loving your neighbour as yourself, as reflected in Jas 2:8, and Jesus' specific teaching about the absolute poor being heirs of the

²²³ Hartin, *James*, 140.

²²⁴ For a thorough understanding of the concept of 'limited good', see Malina, *The New Testament World*, 90–116.

²²⁵ Hartin, *James*, 141.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 140.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 141.

Kingdom of God, set different standards of honour and shame within this community compared to the surrounding Roman society.²²⁸ The Christians were to honour each other, their visitors and everybody else, not according to Roman standards of honour and shame, but according to their own standards.²²⁹ Yet the assembly addressed in Jas 2:1–13 is not keeping their own standards of honour, but is following the Roman standard. That very fact is one of the main problems the author of James is addressing.²³⁰ According to him they should follow their own standards. That would mean that both the equestrian and the beggar should have been honoured equally when visiting the assembly. According to Roman standards, however, that would probably have been perceived as a dishonouring of the equestrian, who in this particular case was also a candidate for political office. The dishonouring would have been implicit in the fact that by treating a beggar equally to him, he would have been put on equal terms with a person lowest in rank in society. That would have been unheard of.

This leads one to ask what consequences that could have had for the Christian assembly. It is likely that this man, being a candidate for political office, had great influence. He was probably an important patron. Being on good terms with him was clearly important for the assembly, because being on good terms with him meant being on good terms with a representative of the Roman Empire, and though the situation was local, it was surely important to be on good terms with the Roman officials. That would make the life of the assembly less difficult. On the other hand, a dishonouring of a Roman official would probably make the life of the assembly far more difficult, yet that is what James is telling them to do. Hence there is a clear cultural critique implicit in James' teaching.²³¹

²²⁸ In agreement with *Ibid.*, 144: "It is chiefly in the area of wealth and poverty that one sees a distinct reversal of values. While the wider society proclaimed wealth to be valuable and deserving of honor, and poverty the path to shamelessness and degradation, Jesus, James, and Paul all reversed this condition. In the community of the followers of Jesus honor came from faith in God (see Jas 1:9–11) rather than wealth and status in society. Christians receive their honor from being part of God's own people."

²²⁹ In agreement with *Ibid.*, 143: "For Christian believers honor was sought not in paying attention to what the wider society endorsed, but rather in what the members of their own community accepted. [...] The community of faith becomes the center to which the believer turns for his or her values and in which he or she seeks honor."

²³⁰ See *Ibid.*, 133: "Instead of embracing God's values and virtues, James's hearers/readers continue to operate according to the values of this world."

²³¹ See *Ibid.*, 146. and the exegesis of vv. 2–4 above.

Intertexture of ἀτιμάζω (v. 6a)

There are some central New Testament texts on this issue.²³² The parable of the vineyard and the tenants in Mark 12:1–12 with parallels in Matt 21:33–46 and Luke 20:9–19 is one of these. The verb ἀτιμάζω is used in Mark 12:4 and in Luke 20:11. Even though the parallel in Matthew does not use the verb ἀτιμάζω, the subject matter of shaming and dishonouring is the same. Specifically in this parable servants of the owner of the vineyard are being dishonoured by the tenants through being beaten, wounded and killed. Lastly the owner of the vineyard sends his own son, but he too is dishonoured by the tenants; they kill him. These acts are considered shameful. When we interpret this parable, we understand that the owner of the vineyard is God, and those that are dishonoured are his servants, and ultimately his son. Again the interpretative point is that by shaming a servant of God or his son, one is in effect dishonouring God. The parallel to Jas 2:6 is significant: by dishonouring a servant of God you dishonour God himself. The situation in James is that the assembly dishonours the beggar who is a representative of the poor, who have been chosen by God. By dishonouring the beggar, the assembly is ultimately dishonouring God.

Let me now turn to a second text from the New Testament that I on an intertextual level find especially relevant for the issue of dishonouring/shaming, namely Rom 2:23. The context here concerns the Jews and their relation to the Law. According to Paul, the Jews see themselves among other things as light to those who are in the darkness (v. 19), then he goes on to a set of rhetorical questions:

you, then, that teach others, will you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? You that forbid adultery, do you commit adultery? You that abhor idols, do you rob temples? You that boast in the law, do you dishonour God by breaking the law?²³³

The textual unit of Rom 2:17–24 seems relevant not only for Jas 2:6 but also for Jas 2:8–11. Some of the same examples used here in Romans, are used in James. Specifically for Jas 2:6 it is relevant because it shows that breaking God's Law in effect is to dishonour God. Paul shows, as does James in the following verses, that to break one single commandment in the Law is to break the whole Law, and that this in fact is to dishonour God, the

²³² I have selected the NT intertexts on the basis of the use of ἀτιμάζω in these texts.

²³³ Rom 2:21–23.

lawgiver. To keep the Law is not a matter of keeping most of the Law or the general idea of the Law, but it is a matter of keeping every single commandment and point in the Law. I have already shown in the exegesis of v. 4, with reference to Lev 19:15, that the partiality of the assembly in fact is equivalent to breaking the Law of righteous judgement. In other words one can say that the assembly, by showing partiality, has dishonoured God, because by showing partiality they have also broken the Law, and breaking the Law is equivalent to dishonouring God.

John 8:49 may also be relevant in this context. The context is a dispute between Jesus and the Jews. These verses show that the dishonouring of Jesus takes several forms. They seek to kill him, they fail to love him, they accuse him of being possessed by a demon, and all this is a way of shaming Jesus. The main point is that when he is dishonoured, so is God. There is a parallel to Jas 2:6 here: just as the dishonouring of Jesus is in effect a dishonouring of God, so is the dishonouring of the beggar in James 2. By shaming the beggar the assembly is also dishonouring the one who has chosen the absolute poor, namely God.

From the intertexture of this verse, I have found that dishonouring the beggar is equivalent to dishonouring God;²³⁴ first, because the beggar is God's elect, and consequently dishonouring the beggar is equivalent to dishonouring the one that chose him. Second, the beggar is God's servant because he was chosen by God, and from the parable of the vineyard and the tenants we have learned that dishonouring a servant is equivalent to dishonouring the servant's master, i.e. God. Third, breaking the Law is in effect equivalent to dishonouring the lawgiver, God, and the assembly has broken the Law by showing partiality.

From the cultural intertexture of this verse I have found that honour and shame probably were one of the central cultural scripts behind the Epistle of James. In Graeco-Roman society honour and shame were significant. The challenge in James 2 is that the acts of the assembly are perfectly acceptable according to Roman standards. The equestrian is being honoured, the beggar is not necessarily being dishonoured. According to Jewish-Christian standards, however, the acts of the assembly are in effect dishonouring the beggar and through him also God. Yet, if the assembly were to honour the beggar according to Jewish-Christian standards, that would have dishonoured the equestrian.

²³⁴ Cf. Prov 14:21, 31; 17:5.

Ideological Texture—The Absolute Poor are not the Powerless

The binaries of coloniser—colonised, power—powerless and centre—margin are all continued in the *confirmatio*. As in the *propositio* and *ratio*, the author of the Epistle tries to shift the understanding of what is centre, margin, power or powerless. When he asks the rhetorical question “Has not God chosen the absolute poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom that he has promised to those who love him?” he shows the members of the assembly yet again, that the power they should follow is not the power of the centre; the coloniser, but the power of the margin; God.

The binaries rich—poor and honour—shame are also significant in the *confirmatio*. It is rather obvious for any reader that an equestrian running for political office and a beggar, fit into the rich—poor binary. However, the author of the Epistle questions this. Of these two persons, who are really the rich and the poor? Through a rhetorical question he draws the attention of the addressees towards their wrongdoing. They have treated the equestrian as if he was the rich one, whereas it is the beggar who really is rich in the eyes of God. This problem leads us over to the honour—shame binary. By honouring the equestrian, the addressees are in fact shaming the beggar. In other words, the Christians were devaluating the very same group and persons, that they should honour, given that the absolute poor were chosen by God. Now, by shaming them, they also are dishonouring God. In a Roman context however, honouring the poor would consequently mean a dishonouring of the rich, in this case an equestrian running for office. As I have written above, one of the foundations of Graeco-Roman society lay at the juxtaposition of honour, shame, patronage and grace. Again, what the author is asking the Christians to do is to go against the cultural etiquette of the society they live in, consequently dishonouring the political power, the coloniser. If they were actually to do that, it must have been taken as resistance against the Empire. The very strong cultural critique implicit in James’ teaching in effect would also be a resistance against the Empire and the Emperor. The argument James is using in addition to turning to the source of their faith, is naming of the oppressors. I shall come back to that on p. 171.

Cultural Texture of καταδυναστεύω (v. 6b)

Moving on to vv. 6b–7, we come to the set of two rhetorical questions that demand ‘yes’ as an answer. The *topos* of partiality is repeated through these rhetorical questions, and they provide additional arguments supporting

the *propositio* of v. 1. I shall begin by examining one of the key terms in the question in v. 6b, namely καταδυναστεύω. The question reads:

Οὐχ οἱ πλούσιοι καταδυναστεύουσιν ὑμῶν καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔλκουσιν ὑμᾶς εἰς κριτήρια;

Is it not the rich who oppress you, and are they not the ones who pull you into the courts of justice?

In v. 6b there seems to be a parallel between oppression and court: the rich²³⁵ are oppressing ‘you’, i.e. the addressees of the Epistle, by dragging them into the courts. To make the point clear, the question can be paraphrased as follows: How can you honour the rich equestrian instead of the beggar, when the rich as a group are your oppressors?

This rhetorical question has moved on to a different sphere than the one in v. 5. In v. 5 the rhetorical question referred to the teaching that the assembly should know from their Jewish-Christian background. It referred directly to the teaching of Jesus from the beatitudes. In v. 6b, however, the argument James is making through this rhetorical question is pragmatic and refers to the cultural intertexture of the assembly. He is now arguing from the point of view that the members of the assembly themselves have chosen to take, namely the point of view of Roman cultural intertexture: if the prerequisite of the addressees was simply that one of the two visitors had considerably high rank, power and influence, and the other had none at all, then the treatment they were giving the first person would most definitely make sense in a Roman cultural context. For any person or group within the Empire it would make sense to be on good terms with such a person of influence. It would make sense to be his clients, and it would make sense to honour him when a possibility to do so emerged. However, if one added to this premise that the very same person was a representative of a wider group who oppressed the assembly, even though he himself was not necessarily an oppressor, then the honouring of him by the assembly seems somewhat odd according to the author of James. This is exactly what James is adding as a condition: it is not only an equestrian that is entering your assembly. No, it is a person who is a representative of your oppressors, even though he himself is not an oppressor, and as such he should not be honoured, not even within a Roman cultural context. James is here using the assembly’s own line of argumentation. This

²³⁵ I understand the relation between οἱ πλούσιοι and ὁ ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος to be somewhat parallel to the relation between ὁ πτωχός and οἱ πτωχοί. Οἱ πλούσιοι represent the group of the rich, whereas ὁ ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος is one specific representative of the group, namely the equestrian who inevitably also has to be rich.

is the only place in Jas 2:1–13 where he is doing just that. All his other arguments against the actions of the assembly are religious arguments. All through these verses he is basically saying to the assembly: “You are living as Romans, and it is wrong. You should live as Christians.” However, here in v. 6b he says: “Even for Romans, these actions of yours are illogical.”

In order to follow his argumentation here, we need to examine more closely the intriguing issue of oppression. How shall we understand *καταδυναστεύω*? In the LXX the word is used about the Egyptian oppression of the Israelites, see Exod 1:13, and in Amos 8:4 it is used about the subjugation of the poor of the earth. The word can also be used to mean getting control over something,²³⁶ to exploit or dominate someone.²³⁷ In Strabo the word is used about being under someone’s rule,²³⁸ being oppressed by someone else’s rule,²³⁹ and about being overpowered.²⁴⁰ From these texts, it seems that *καταδυναστεύω* has a very strong aspect of dominance by one group over another.

In a Roman imperial context this makes sense. The Roman influence was probably very dominating on any level of society: political, military, cultural. The colonisation of the Mediterranean basin took the form of overpowering other groups. Hence the reference to oppression may very well be a reference to imperial rule. Since the rich man is an equestrian seeking political office, this understanding seems relevant. My dating of the Epistle of James is to the late first century C.E. Most likely the Epistle was written and read under the rule of the emperor Domitian. We know that during his reign there were persecutions, and if the reference to oppression here is also a reference to imperial rule, this makes sense against the background of Domitian’s rule.

²³⁶ See the article on *καταδυναστεύω* in Liddell, Scott, and Jones, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 890.

²³⁷ See the article on *καταδυναστεύω* in Danker, ed. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 516.

²³⁸ Strabo 7.7.8 in Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo in Eight Volumes*, trans. Horace Leonard Jones, 1st ed., LCL, vol. III (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967; reprint, 3).

²³⁹ See Strabo 6.2.4.27 in Ibid.; Strabo 16.1.26.8 in Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo in Eight Volumes*, trans. Horace Leonard Jones, 1st ed., LCL, vol. VII (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1961; reprint, 2).

²⁴⁰ See Strabo 9.5.19.21 in Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo in Eight Volumes*, trans. Horace Leonard Jones, 1st ed., LCL, vol. IV (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1961; reprint, 2).

However, we cannot limit the meaning of καταδυναστεύω to imperial oppression in this context.²⁴¹ The equestrian is a representative of the group of the rich. However, in Jas 2:6b, it is not the single representative who is mentioned as oppressor, but the whole group (οἱ πλούσιοι). Therefore we have to look at other forms of oppression than the strictly imperial one facilitated by the emperor. A key to this is found in v. 6b itself: to act as oppressors (καταδυναστεύω) is linked to pulling victims into the courts of justice (ἐλκουσιν ὑμᾶς εἰς κριτήρια). Laws says that oppression here has to do with the abuse of power, and she goes on to say, “If James has deliberately portrayed the rich man of his illustration as an equestrian, of the order from which tax officers were drawn, then that particular form of oppression may be suggested.”²⁴² This of course presupposes that the tax collectors would go to the courts of justice if taxes were not paid. One can imagine that there would be members of the Christian community that simply could not afford paying taxes, hence this would be an example of the rich oppressing the poor.²⁴³

Moo has a different view from Laws. He argues that most of James’ readers were probably poor agricultural labourers exploited by a small group of wealthy landowners.²⁴⁴ This is the group that is also accused of oppression in Jas 5:4. When oppression is linked to being pulled into the courts of justice, he understands this to mean the wealthy landowners “using their wealth and influence with the courts to secure favourable verdicts against the poor [...] such as forcing people to forfeit their land for late payment of mortgages”.²⁴⁵

The Epistle of James fails to be specific about why ‘you’ are dragged into the courts. However, I find both Laws’ and Moo’s suggestions relevant. As I have argued earlier, I am convinced that the man wearing a gold ring in v. 2 is an equestrian, and as such he is a single representative of the wider group of the πλούσιοι. I have also placed the assemblies addressed in James 2 in Graeco-Roman cities. Thus, against the background of James 2,

²⁴¹ In agreement with Johnson, who says that there “is no need to postulate a formal persecution. It is universal enough a characteristic of the world’s rich to oppress and humiliate the poor by ‘legal’ means”, see Johnson, *The Letter of James*, 226.

²⁴² Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 105.

²⁴³ Elsa Tamez simply calls the rich ‘the oppressing class’ when she comments on v. 6b, see Tamez, *The Scandalous Message of James: Faith Without Works Is Dead*, 22.

²⁴⁴ Moo, *The Letter of James*, 108f.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 109. Gerhard Maier has a similar understanding of why the oppression is linked to the court of justice: “Da die Ärmern in der Regel den Reichen schuldeten, mussten sie unter Umständen sogar mit Schuldhaf und Schuldklaverei rechnen,” see Maier, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 114.

Laws' suggestion seems more reasonable than Moo's. However, against the background of the wider context of the whole Epistle of James, Moo's suggestion seems reasonable as well.

One major point concerning the oppression is that it is public. James does not talk about an oppression that goes on in silence, but one that is taken to the courts, and therefore is publicly known. Whether the oppressor is a tax collector or a wealthy landowner is not that important, but the fact that the oppressor takes the oppression into the public sphere, is important.

Ideological Texture of καταδυναστεύω

The very strong cultural critique implicit in James' teaching in effect would also be a resistance against the Empire and the Emperor. The argument James is using in addition to shifting the binaries centre—margin, power—powerless by turning to the source of the faith of the assembly, is naming of the oppressors. The rich are the ones that oppress them. In a postcolonial perspective, naming of oppressors is central. It is important from a postcolonial perspective, because colonisation of the minds is central to colonialism. A decolonisation of the minds is therefore equally significant to postcolonialism. A starting point for decolonisation of the minds, is to name the ones who colonised the minds in the first place, i.e. name the oppressors or the oppressive regimes. So when the author of the Epistle of James is naming the oppressors as the rich, he is actually starting a decolonisation-process of the minds of his addressees. A process highly necessary for their adaption of his message.

Intertexture of τὸ καλὸν ὄνομα ἐπικληθὲν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς and βλασφημέω (v. 7)

As outlined above, in v. 6b the sphere in the argument is moved from a religious to a Roman cultural sphere. With v. 7 the author of the Epistle of James moves the rhetorical questions back to the religious sphere. The question in v. 7 reads:

Οὐκ αὐτοὶ βλασφημοῦσιν τὸ καλὸν ὄνομα τὸ ἐπικληθὲν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς;

Is it not they who revile the good name that has been invoked over you?

The same people who are oppressing the people of the assembly are now accused of blasphemy against "the good name that has been invoked over you". First, I shall investigate the object of the sentence, τὸ καλὸν ὄνομα τὸ ἐπικληθὲν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς. What is the 'good name'? Second, I shall investigate what the rich are accused of, namely blasphemy (βλασφημέω).

If we look at the intertexture of the expression τὸ καλὸν ὄνομα ἐπικληθὲν ἐφ' ὑμῶς we can observe that it is used in Acts 15:17 in the context of James' speech at the Apostles' meeting. James²⁴⁶ there quotes from Amos 9:12 (LXX). The expression is also found in e.g. Jer 14:9 and Deut 28:10 where it is related to God's name, Yahwe. This Yahwe-formula from the Old Testament corresponds to the Hebrew expression נִקְרָא שֵׁם יְהוָה עָלָיָהּ. According to Schmidt, this shows "the common Old Testament practice of naming the name of God over a man, who is in this way God's possession, because God has revealed and made Himself known to him."²⁴⁷ According to Ådna, "this idiom as an expression of ownership can have both a negative and a positive colouring; i.e., it not only addresses cases of subjugation or dominion, but also, particularly when it is related to God's name, can mean ownership in the sense of care and protection."²⁴⁸ In the context of James 2 it is quite clear that 'the good name' is a reference either to God,²⁴⁹ or to Jesus.²⁵⁰ Dibelius argues that 'the good name' in Jas 2:7 should be understood as the name of Christ, but as a Christianised version of this Yahwe formula.²⁵¹ This is in agreement with Schmidt in *TDNT*.²⁵² Hence, when James says that "the good name has been invoked over you", it is a sign that the assembly belongs to this name and that they are under the care and protection of this name. I agree with Dibelius and Schmidt that this is a Christianised version of the Yahwe-formula, thus the good name is Jesus.²⁵³ This means that when the rich blaspheme against the good name, they blaspheme against Jesus. In addition the name and the one

²⁴⁶ In this context we are of course talking about the historical James, the brother of the Lord.

²⁴⁷ Schmidt, "καλεω κτλ." 498.

²⁴⁸ Jostein Ådna, "James' Position at the Summit Meeting of the Apostles and the Elders in Jerusalem (Acts 15)," in *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles*, ed. Jostein Ådna and Hans Kvalbein, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 146.

²⁴⁹ Maynard-Reid, *Poverty and Wealth in James*, 65.

²⁵⁰ See e.g. Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, 28; Mussner, *Der Jakobusbrief*, 123; Johnson, *The Letter of James*, 226; Moo, *The Letter of James*, 109; Hartin, *James*, 121.

²⁵¹ Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 175.

²⁵² He says that: "Apart from Ac. 15:17 we may refer to Jm. 2:7, where the same is said of the name of Jesus", see Schmidt, "καλεω κτλ." 498.

²⁵³ One may ask whether this is a reference to baptism, given that it is a Christianised version of the Yahweh-formula. Peter Stulmacher seems to be of that opinion, see Peter Stulmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments: Von der Paulusschule bis zur Johannesoffenbarung. Der Kanon und seine Auslegung*, vol. II (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 69. Laws argues that: "The use by James of the aorist participle may suggest that there is here a deliberate allusion to the specific time at which the name was received, rather than to the general character of the readers." See Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 105.

who carries the name belong together. This has as a consequence that if you dishonour the bearer of the name, you dishonour the name.²⁵⁴ Therefore, the oppression in v. 6b may be understood as blasphemy against the name of Jesus. Let me now investigate the term βλασφημέω.

According to *LSJ* there are several aspects of βλασφημέω. Probably the main understanding is to ‘speak profanely of sacred things’.²⁵⁵ Other aspects of the word are to ‘speak ill or to the prejudice of one’, ‘to speak slander’, ‘speak impiously of God’, and ‘speak evil of’.²⁵⁶ From this I draw the conclusion that βλασφημέω is used both in religious and profane contexts, and when honour and shame are part of the picture, βλασφημέω clearly falls into the category of shame. To blaspheme is to dishonour in the worst way. This point of view is in agreement with *BDAG*: “Primarily ‘to demean through speech’, an especially sensitive matter in an honor-shame oriented society.”²⁵⁷

In the New Testament there are 56 occurrences of the word group βλασφημέω/βλασφημία/βλάσφημος, 34 of them are represented by the verb.²⁵⁸ The Old Testament background of the word is that of somebody reviling God’s name, cursing his name, ascribing to themselves divine powers or claiming divine dignity and position.²⁵⁹ Blasphemy against God was taken very seriously and could result in the death penalty,²⁶⁰ and it is against this background that the charges against Jesus of blasphemy should be understood in Mark 2:1–12 with parallels in Matt 9:1–8 and Luke 5:17–26. This is the story about the healing of a paralytic, where Jesus says to the paralytic: “My son, your sins are forgiven”. The scribes present understood this as blasphemy, because Jesus—by forgiving sins—put himself in the position of God. This is of course a clearly religious use of the word. The word group can also be used in the New Testament in a more profane sense. When used in this way, it can have the meaning of disparage, slander, defame, see e.g. Tit 3:2.²⁶¹ It can also mean disparagement,

²⁵⁴ Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*: “Name und Träger des Namens gehören zusammen; wer diese schmäht, schmäht den ‘edlen Namen’.”

²⁵⁵ See the article on βλασφημέω in Liddell, Scott, and Jones, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 317.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 317f.

²⁵⁷ See the article on βλασφημέω in Danker, ed. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 178.

²⁵⁸ Ottfried Hofius, “βλασφημέω κτλ.” in EDNT, ed. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, vol. 1, 219–221, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 220.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 220.

²⁶⁰ See Lev 24:10–23 and Num 15:30f.

²⁶¹ Hofius, “βλασφημέω κτλ.” 220.

reviling, slander and vile gossip, see Rev 2:9, Mark 7:22 with parallels Col 3:8, Eph 4:31 and 1 Tim 6:4.²⁶² However, the religious use of the word is more prominent in the New Testament, and when this is the aspect, the verb has the general meaning of slander, whereas the noun has the general meaning of calumny or defamation.²⁶³

In Rom 2:24 the perspective is that the Gentiles blaspheme the name of God. In James, the name of Christ is blasphemed. Another aspect is that false teachers blaspheme and ridicule both the church and its faith, see 1 Tim 1:20 and 2 Pet 2:2.²⁶⁴ From this we can see that blasphemy is not only something done by Gentiles and non-believers, it is also something that persons claiming to be believers are doing by being false teachers. The church, their faith and God can also be victims of blasphemy. That this should be understood as reviling, slander and disparagement, are all clear indications of the close connection to the idea of honour and shame. Hence blasphemy is a way of shaming. False teachers are shaming the church, its faith and God by their false teaching. To put oneself in the position of God is in effect to shame God, and to treat God's assemblies, the believers of Christ and God's elect badly, is in effect to shame God himself.

In James 2, this is exactly what the rich are accused of doing. They are oppressing the Christian assembly, and by doing this, they are committing acts of blasphemy against Christ. In addition, the blasphemy can consist of other acts of dishonouring Christ. However, Jas 2:7 does not express exactly what other ways of dishonouring the blasphemy may have consisted of. In the cultural context, though, to act disgracefully or speak disgracefully could be understood as blasphemy,²⁶⁵ so could speaking ill of²⁶⁶ and abusing,²⁶⁷ as well as slandering²⁶⁸ and disparaging.²⁶⁹ That

²⁶² Ibid., 220.

²⁶³ Ibid., 220.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 220.

²⁶⁵ See Oration 7.116.2 in Chrysostomos, *Discourses*.

²⁶⁶ See Oration 34.14.5 in Chrysostomos, *Discourses*.

²⁶⁷ See *Juppiter tragoedus* 37.5 in Lucianus, *Lucian in eight volumes*, trans. A.M. Harmon, 1st ed., LCL, vol. II (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968; reprint, 5); *Alexander* 25.8 in Lucianus, *Lucian in eight volumes*; *Legatio ad Gaium* 170.1 in Philo, *Philo in ten volumes*, trans. F.H. Colson, 1st ed., LCL, vol. X (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971; reprint, 1); *De specialibus legibus* 4.197.1 in Philo, *Philo in ten volumes*, trans. F.H. Colson, 1st ed., LCL, vol. VIII (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989; reprint, 4).

²⁶⁸ See Oration 31.124.9 in Chrysostomos, *Discourses*.

²⁶⁹ Oration 66.23.6 in Chrysostomos, *Discourses*.

means that also within a Roman cultural context, βλασφημέω should be understood within the framework of honour and shame. When the rich are named in Jas 2:7 as a group of people who “revile the good name that has been invoked over you”, this indicates that both Jesus and the assembly have been dishonoured.

Summary of vv. 5–7

First of all sibling terminology is repeated from v. 1 and it is also somewhat intensified through the use of the adjective ‘beloved’. Thus the address in v. 5 is ‘my beloved brothers and sisters’, and this address clearly shows the affection that the author of the Epistle has for his addressees. Following this address there are three rhetorical questions demanding ‘yes’ as an answer, and one statement. The first rhetorical question draws directly on the Jewish-Christian faith of the assembly: *God has chosen the absolute poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom that he has promised to those who love him.* I have found that to be elected by God and to be heirs of his Kingdom are the same. I have also found that this first rhetorical question draws on very strong Jesus traditions, e.g. the parable about the vineyard and the tenants (Matt 21:33–46 with parallels in Mark 12:1–12 and Luke 20:9–19) and the beatitudes in Matt 5:2–12 and Luke 6:20–23. The utter contrast in Jas 2:1–13 is that the teaching about the absolute poor as chosen by God obviously was known to the assembly in James 2, yet they follow Roman cultural etiquette and through this they dishonour the beggar, the very one that they on the basis of their own Jewish-Christian background should have honoured. I found that the fact that God has chosen the absolute poor serves as a further support for the *propositio* of Jas 2:1–13.

The author of the Epistle says directly that the assembly has dishonoured the beggar (v. 6a). I related my interpretation of Jas 2:5–7 to Hartin’s investigations about honour and shame in the first-century Roman Empire, and found that in the same way as honour and shame were public matters in the first-century Roman Empire, they were also public matters in the assembly. By giving the beggar a dishonourable seat, according to Jewish-Christian tradition, and the equestrian an honourable seat, the assembly is following this public pattern of honour and shame. I have found that by doing so they in effect dishonour God himself, because through dishonouring God’s elect they dishonour God. This does not, according to the author of James, make sense. First of all the absolute poor are God’s elect, they are the ones rich in faith, i.e. those who trust in God and love him; they

are not at all the ones that oppress the assembly or drag them into the courts of justice. However, the rich are accused of doing exactly that. They are named as the oppressors that blaspheme against Jesus. I have found that even though the equestrian of vv. 2–4 is rich, it is not necessarily he himself who is named as the oppressor in vv. 6b–7. It is the wider group of the rich that is named as oppressors. However, I did argue that the relation between the equestrian of vv. 2–4 and the rich oppressors of vv. 6b–7 is somewhat the same as the relation between the beggar of vv. 2–4 and the group of the absolute poor of v. 5. In the same way as the beggar is one single individual from the wider group of the absolute poor, the equestrian is one single individual from the wider group of the rich. It is not evident what the oppression consisted of. However, there is a connection between oppression and the courts of justice. Hence, the oppression seemed to be a public matter. It may have had to do with the taxes or with debt.

One might say that the πίστις of the assembly is a contrast to the πίστις of the poor. I have argued that πίστις should be understood as trust. The beggar trusts God, whereas it seems that the assembly does not. Instead they put their trust in a representative of the Roman Empire. Through doing this, they dishonour God's elect.

From a postcolonial perspective we have seen that the binaries coloniser—colonised, power—powerless and centre—margin have been continued. In addition we have seen the binaries rich—poor and honour—shame. James is continually trying to shift these binaries so that the assembly will understand that the colonial power is not the real power, the absolute poor are the ones that are really the rich ones, Rome as a centre should not be a centre for their faith, and honouring the poor is not a dishonouring of the equestrian. In addition we have seen that James is naming the oppressors. From a postcolonial perspective this is significant as it is the first step towards decolonising the minds and therefore the first step for the addressees to adapt James' message.

VERSES 8–11—EXORNATIO

⁸ Εἰ μέντοι νόμον τελεῖτε βασιλικὸν κατὰ τὴν γραφὴν· ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτὸν, καλῶς ποιεῖτε· ⁹ εἰ δὲ προσωπολημπτεῖτε, ἁμαρτίαν ἐργάζεσθε ἐλεγχόμενοι ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου ὡς παραβάται. ¹⁰ ὅστις γὰρ ὅλον τὸν νόμον τηρήσῃ πταίσῃ δὲ ἐν ἐνί, γέγονεν πάντων ἔνοχος. ¹¹ ὁ γὰρ εἰπὼν· μὴ μοιχεύσης, εἶπεν καὶ· μὴ φονεύσης· εἰ δὲ οὐ μοιχεύεις φονεύεις δέ, γέγονας παραβάτης νόμου.

⁸ If however, you fulfil, according to the scripture, the royal Law, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself", you do well. ⁹ But if on the other hand you show partiality, you commit a sin and thus will be condemned by the Law as

transgressors.¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole Law, but in one [point] fails, he has become liable of [it] all.¹¹ For the one who said, “You shall not commit adultery”, he also said, “You shall not murder”. But if you do not commit adultery, but you murder, you have become a transgressor of the Law.

Inner Texture

We have now come to the *exornatio* of the textual unit of Jas 2:1–13. Through the *exornatio*, James confirms his previous arguments against partiality, arguments that were primarily religiously based.

Earlier, in v. 5, James referred directly to Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount/Plain as a teaching that would oppose partiality. He now refers to the alternative action to partiality: fulfilment of the royal Law. Either the royal Law itself or the fulfilment of it is identified as the love command with reference to Lev 19:18. The love command is of course repeated and interpreted by Jesus in Mark 12:28–31 with parallels in Matt 22:35–40 and Luke 10:25–28, hence we can again see in this textual unit that Jesus’ teaching is used as a contrast to the actions of the assembly. In vv. 4, 5, 6 and 7 James has used rhetorical questions to make it clear to the addressees that their actions are wrong, primarily on the basis of their own religious background. The rhetorical questions were used from a negative point of view, in the sense that they were used as arguments against the actions of the addressees. V. 8 follows the same set of religious arguments; however, here the point of view is positive. James is now giving the assembly the positive alternative set of actions: “to fulfil, according to the scriptures, the royal Law”. In the sections below I will investigate further what is meant by the royal Law, fulfilment of it, and the Jesus tradition about loving one’s neighbour, as well as the relation to Leviticus 19. Before I do that, let me reflect further on a few important points concerning the inner texture.

If we view the *exornatio* of 2:1–13 in the context of chapter two as a whole, these verses represent a bridge between the *topos* of partiality in the first half of the chapter, and the *topos* of faith and works in the second half of the chapter.²⁷⁰ Hence, Jas 2:14–26 should not be read in a vacuum, but against the background of 2:1–13, and vice versa. Faith is worthless if it is not accompanied by works that are consistent with the faith. The faith in Jas 2:1–13 is the Jewish-Christian faith, in which neighbour-love

²⁷⁰ In agreement with Luke Leuk Cheung, *The Genre, Composition and Hermeneutics of the Epistle of James* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster, 2003), 97.

is central, and in which there is no partiality. However, the works of the assembly of James 2 are not consistent with their Jewish-Christian faith. They are showing partiality instead of neighbour-love.

A second observation on an inner textual level is that both vv. 8 and 9 are conditional sentences and they function as antitheses to each other.²⁷¹ They both belong to the group of conditional sentences called *realis*.²⁷² At the same time v. 9 refers to partiality, which the author has previously shown that the assembly is guilty of.²⁷³ The *protasis* ('if') of v. 8 is εἰ μέντοι νόμον τελεῖτε βασιλικὸν κατὰ τὴν γραφήν· ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτὸν, and the *apodosis* ('then') is καλῶς ποιεῖτε, whereas the *protasis* of v. 9 is εἰ δὲ προσωπολημπτεῖτε, and the *apodosis* is ἁμαρτίαν ἐργάζεσθε (ἐλεγχόμενοι ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου ὡς παραβάται). Vv. 8 and 9 are contrasts to each other;²⁷⁴ however, the assessment of the actions is the same.

Then of course there is the issue of what type of relation to reality the conditional sentence has. Although the conditional sentences of vv. 8 and 9 are *realis*, this is not to be confused with perceiving their relation to reality to be real. That would be a misunderstanding. *Realis* is an expression that identifies the relation between the *protasis* and the *apodosis* as real.²⁷⁵ The relation to reality, however, is indefinite. For vv. 8 and 9 this should have the following consequence: it is true that you do well if you fulfil according to the scriptures, the royal Law (v. 8), and it is also true that you commit a sin and will be condemned by the Law if you show partiality (v. 9).

Since the two conditional sentences are put up as contrasts to each other, it seems likely that if one is linked to real-life experiences of the assembly, the other would be as well. In this particular case I have already established that the acts of partiality that the assembly were accused of, were real. Thus the conditional sentence in v. 9 is linked to reality. It therefore seems likely to me that the conditional sentence of v. 8 should also be linked to reality. Hence, this might indicate that vv. 8 and 9 show us that the assembly was not only treating persons with partiality, there were also instances where they did fulfil the royal Law by loving their

²⁷¹ Mussner has made the same observation, see Mussner, *Der Jakobusbrief*, 123.

²⁷² See the section 'Reflections on the conditional sentence of vv. 2–4', above for more references to *realis*.

²⁷³ In v. 9 the verb προσωπολημπτέω is used.

²⁷⁴ In agreement with Moo, *The Letter of James*, 111.

²⁷⁵ Hoffmann and Siebenthal, *Griechische Grammatik zum Neuen Testament*, 551–553, § 281.

neighbours as themselves.²⁷⁶ From one point of view they were transgressors of the Law, because they showed partiality; however, that was not the only way they knew how to act. From another point of view, they did well by loving their neighbours as themselves.

However, whether the conditional sentences here are linked to real life or not, is actually not the most important aspect. The most important aspect is that the sentences in effect are saying this: a. *Love your neighbour as yourself*. b. *Do not show partiality*.

Hence, the admonition from the *propositio* of v. 1 is repeated in v. 9, and the author shows that the love command/neighbour-love and partiality are entities contrary to each other.²⁷⁷

I shall now investigate further the intertexture of νόμος in v. 8, which raises the questions of what is meant by the royal Law, fulfilment of it, and the Jesus tradition about loving one's neighbour, as well as the relation of our text to Leviticus 19.

Intertexture of νόμος (v. 8)

There are three distinct qualifications of νόμος in James: the perfect Law in 1:25, νόμος τέλειος; the Law of liberty in 1:25²⁷⁸ and 2:12, νόμος ἐλευθερίας; and the royal Law in 2:8, νόμος βασιλικός. James is the only text in the New Testament and the LXX where perfect, liberty and royal are used as qualifications of the Law. However, there are significant theological backgrounds in the Old Testament teachings for all these qualifications, and I shall come back to these shortly. With regard to James, these three qualifications together obviously form his understanding of 'the Law'. In other words, they do not represent three distinct and different understandings of the Law in James, but rather three aspects of the same Law.

²⁷⁶ In agreement with Laws, see Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 107. Laws does not however use the relation between the two conditional sentences as an argument for her view. She argues, rather, on the basis of the use of the conjunction μέντοι. She argues that the use is emphatic and thus indicates that the addressees accept the importance of the love command. This is also in agreement with Adamson, see Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, 113f.

²⁷⁷ In agreement with Dibelius, see Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 177; Mussner, *Der Jakobusbrief*, 123.

²⁷⁸ In 1:25 liberty is a further qualification of the perfect law, the perfect law of liberty, νόμος τέλειος ὁ τῆς ἐλευθερίας.

Before I look at the Old Testament background, let me have a look at the use of νόμος in the New Testament. According to *BDAG* there are three main uses of νόμος in the New Testament:²⁷⁹

- 1) “a procedure or practice that has taken hold, a custom, rule, principle, norm”.
- 2) “constitutional or statutory legal system, law”.
- 3) “a collection of holy writings precious to God’s people, sacred ordinance”.

The latter can be understood in the strict sense as the Pentateuch, see e.g. Matt 12:5, John 8:5 and 1 Cor 9:8, or in a wider sense as Holy Scripture in general.²⁸⁰ Νόμος understood as “a constitutional or statutory legal system”, often specifically means “the law that Moses received from God and is the standard according to which membership in the people of Israel is determined”.²⁸¹ Examples of this use are plenty, see e.g. Luke 2:22–24 and Rom 9:31. Νόμος in Jas 2:9–11 should be understood in this way, i.e. as ‘constitutional or statutory legal system’, even though some would understand 2:9 in the first sense as “a procedure or practice that has taken hold, a custom, rule, principle, norm”.²⁸²

On the other hand, the first understanding of νόμος (as custom, rule, principle or norm) is probably the one we find in Jas 2:8. More specifically one can say that it is the principle or norm “of life under the lordship of Jesus Christ as a ‘new law’ or ‘system’ of conduct that constitutes an unwritten tradition”.²⁸³ This understanding of the term is seen in Paul in Gal 6:2 where the issue is the fulfilment of the Law of Christ through bearing the burdens of each other.²⁸⁴ This Law fulfilment is strongly related to the Law fulfilment in Jas 2:8 through loving your neighbour as yourself. The author of James names the new ‘system of conduct’ the royal Law in 2:8 and the Law of liberty in 2:12. It is reasonable to say that James’ understanding is that under the lordship of Christ the love command should be a guiding principle both when reading the Mosaic Law, as well as when reading the Holy Scriptures.²⁸⁵ To fulfil the royal Law must be to love your

²⁷⁹ See the article on νόμος in Danker, ed. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 677f.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 678.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 677.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ This understanding of νόμος is also seen in Rom 3:27b and 8:2a.

²⁸⁵ As in Matt 5:17–20 and 22:37–40. See in addition Cheung, *Genre, Composition and Hermeneutics*, 100f.

neighbour as yourself. This stands in utter contrast to showing partiality. Hence, fulfilment of the royal Law in this context must be to honour the beggar who is a representative of a group that has been chosen by God. V. 8 thus refers to v. 5 and vv. 2–3.

Let me have a closer look at the further qualifications of νόμος in James. I acknowledge my dependence on Cheung.²⁸⁶ I shall start with the perfect Law, νόμος τέλειος, which we find in 1:25. An important background for this qualification is found in Ps 19,²⁸⁷ even though the exact qualification is not found in the LXX version of the Psalm.²⁸⁸ The tone of the psalm is set in v. 2 (the Hebrew text):

Hebrew (Ps 19:2):

הַשָּׁמַיִם מְסַפְּרִים כְּבוֹד־אֱלֹהִים וּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵיו מְגִיד הַרְקִיעַ:

NRSV (Ps 19:1):

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.²⁸⁹

The whole psalm seems to be a declaration of the glory of God, and v. 8 (the Hebrew text) a declaration of the Law of the Lord as perfect:

Hebrew (Ps 19:8):

תּוֹרַת יְהוָה תְּמִימָה מְשִׁיבַת נֶפֶשׁ עֲדוּת יְהוָה נֶאֱמָנָה מַחְכִּימַת פְּתִי:

NRSV (Ps 19:7):

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the LORD are sure, making wise the simple.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 92–120.

²⁸⁷ There is a scholarly debate around the unity/disunity of Psalm 19. The psalm obviously has two main parts, vv. 2–7 (the Hebrew text) and vv. 8–15 (the Hebrew text). The first part has creation as a theme, whereas the second part has Yahweh's Torah as a theme. Some scholars have suggested that these two parts are so different from each other that they must belong to different sources, whereas other scholars have argued for the unity of the psalm. For an overview over these different viewpoints and a thorough analysis of the psalm, see Hartmut Gese, *Alttestamentliche Studien* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), 139–148. I shall not dwell on this issue; however, since I am going to quote from both parts of the psalm it is proper to make a short comment. The text that is transmitted may have several sources; however, what is significant for my interpretation of Jas 2:8 is not these different sources of the psalm, but the psalm as transmitted.

²⁸⁸ Ps 18 in the LXX.

²⁸⁹ Ps 18:2 in LXX: οἱ οὐρανοὶ διηγούνται δόξαν θεοῦ, ποιήσιν δὲ χειρῶν αὐτοῦ ἀναγγέλλει τὸ στερέωμα.

²⁹⁰ Ps 18:8 in LXX: ὁ νόμος τοῦ κυρίου ἄμωμος, ἐπιστρέφων ψυχὰς ἢ μαρτυρία κυρίου πιστή, σοφίζουσα νήπια.

The Greek term used is ἄμωμος which is a synonym for τέλειος, and the perfection of the Law seems to be strongly linked to the fact that it is not any law but the Law of the Lord. Hence, it is perfect. This is a central background for the understanding the author of James has when he uses the qualification τέλειος about the Law in Jas 1:25.²⁹¹

The term τέλειος is used in Matt 5:48 and 19:21. The context in Matt 5 is that of loving your enemies and perfection is connected with God's perfection: "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly father is perfect." This seems to underline what I argued above, that the Law is perfect because it is God's Law. Matt 19:21 concerns the conversation between Jesus and the rich man, where perfection is linked to salvation. The wealth of the man is an obvious obstacle to his salvation. One may say that perfection is again connected to God through his salvation. I conclude that when James talks about νόμος τέλειος there is an understanding that the Law is perfect because it is the Law of God.

The next qualification James uses of the Law is liberty, νόμος ἐλευθερίας. The qualification is used alone in 2:12 about being 'judged by the Law of liberty', and it is used as a further qualification in 1:25, νόμος τέλειος ὁ τῆς ἐλευθερίας, the perfect Law of liberty, or the perfect Law, that one which is of freedom.²⁹² Hence, God's Law is also a Law of freedom. The background for an understanding of liberty as a qualification has been discussed briefly in the literature. Cheung gives a good overview of this discussion, and I shall simply reiterate the main points here.²⁹³ Some argue that the idea of freedom comes from the Stoics,²⁹⁴ others that the

²⁹¹ Peter Stuhlmacher is of the opinion that James by the perfect Law (of freedom) means the fulfilment of the Mosaic law through the love command, see Peter Stuhlmacher, "Jesu vollkommenes Gesetz der Freiheit. Zum Verständnis der Bergpredigt," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 79, no. 2 (1982), 291. I agree with Stuhlmacher on this point. As I shall show later, it seems that James is of the opinion that through Christ and his understanding of the love command the Law has been fulfilled. James' understanding of the Law thus has its background in Jesus' teaching, in which the love command is central. The single commandments have not been set aside, but they are to be emphasised and ranked through the love command. This view is also argued by Stuhlmacher in his New Testament theology, see Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 69.

²⁹² See Cheung, *Genre, Composition and Hermeneutics*, 93, where he in note 15 comments on the use of the article: "The article before the genitive phrase is almost pure demonstrative."

²⁹³ See *Ibid.*, 93–96.

²⁹⁴ See e.g. Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 148: "Die Formulierung νόμος τέλειος ὁ τῆς ἐλευθερίας weist aber auf gewisse Gedanken vorchristlicher Herkunft. [...] Der Gedanke vom Gesetz der Freiheit aber begegnet zunächst auf griechischem Boden. Die Stoiker sind es ja vor allem, die den Gedanken von der Freiheit des Weisen hervorgehoben haben, vgl. den Satz bei Diogenes Laertius, Zeno 64 § 121, dass der Weise allein frei sei, die Schlechten

background is in the Old Testament, especially the thought about the free obedience of the Law in Exod 35:5, Deut 28:47, Pss 1:2, 40:8 and 54:6. A third suggestion has come from Ward and Wall that the phrase should be linked to the Levitical Jubilee

where ‘freedom’ is a reference to liberty granted to the poor and the oppressed. [...] specific parallels in the liberation from the oppression of the powerful can be found in Lev. 25:46 and Jas 2:2–7 (cf. Jas 5:1–6; par. Lev. 25:39–46).²⁹⁵

I value these suggestions about how to understand the Law of liberty, either against a Stoic background where “keeping the law, the Reason of the cosmos, brings about the state of inner freedom”,²⁹⁶ against a general Old Testament background, or more specifically against the background of the Jubilee in Leviticus 25. Actually, all of these suggestions should be paralleling each other. James can both be drawing on a general Hellenistic pool of thought, which the Stoics also did, as well as his Jewish-Christian background. However, the Jewish-Christian background is far more central to the understanding of the Law of liberty than the Stoic connection. In this tradition the teaching of Jesus as transmitted by Matthew is central. Jesus’ Messianic interpretation of the Law in the Sermon on the Mount is both an expression of the perfect Law and of freedom. It is the fulfilment of the Mosaic Law.²⁹⁷

Based on this I would say that freedom is an incitement and a catalyst for acting according to the Law as summed up in the love command. Hence, the Law of liberty, which is also the perfect Law or God’s Law, is a law that is summed up in the love command: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” This love command is of course from Lev 19:18, and the citation in Jas 2:8 is an exact quotation from the LXX. Due to the importance of Leviticus 19 to James 2, I shall come back to a more thorough investigation of the relationship between the two below.²⁹⁸ But

aber Knechte.” See also Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 179. More recently this has been argued thoroughly by Matt A. Jackson-McCabe, see Jackson-McCabe, *Logos and Law in the Letter of James: The Law of Nature, the Law of Moses, and the Law of Freedom*, 154.

²⁹⁵ See Cheung who refers this view in Cheung, *Genre, Composition and Hermeneutics*, 94.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 93f.

²⁹⁷ See Stuhlmacher, “Jesu vollkommenes Gesetz der Freiheit,” 291.

²⁹⁸ In the exegesis of Jas 2:4 above I said that Leviticus 19 is significant in the Holiness Code, Leviticus 17–26. When I now look at Leviticus 19 again, I shall focus more on the inner texture of that specific chapter than on its wider context in the Holiness Code.

before that, let me have a look at the last qualification of νόμος, namely βασιλικός, which is the qualification used in Jas 2:8.

From an inner textual perspective, νόμος βασιλικός links v. 8 to v. 5, where the issue is that the elect poor are rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom (ἡ βασιλεία).²⁹⁹ To fulfil the royal Law is what one is supposed to do as the elect and heirs of the Kingdom of God.

The royal Law can also from an inner textual perspective very well be the love command; however, from the same inner textual perspective, the love command can just as well be the fulfilment of the royal Law.³⁰⁰ Moreover, on the basis of the previous analysis of the Law of liberty, equivalence between the royal Law and the love command seems reasonable. However, there is more to be said:

According to the rabbis, the Torah derives its authority from the 'kingdom of heaven.' They interpreted the biblical passages introduced with such words as 'I am Yahweh (your God)' (as in Exod 22:6 and found repeated in Lev 19) as manifestations of the divine authority of the Torah.³⁰¹

Since a quotation from Leviticus 19 is very central to Jas 2:8, I find it reasonable that the authority of the Law from the 'Kingdom of heaven', i.e. divine authority, is central to an understanding of the qualification βασιλικός. In Leviticus 19 'I am the Lord' is repeated in vv. 4, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 25, 28, 30, 31, 32, 34, 36 and 37. These multiple repetitions of the divine authority underline it, and one of the verses where the divine authority is stressed is v. 18, which is central to Jas 2:8. Hence, the νόμος βασιλικός refers to the royal Law as the Law from the Kingdom of heaven, the Law from God.³⁰² It has a divine authority. I have earlier shown that the perfect Law, νόμος τέλειος, basically means the same, namely God's Law. The νόμος βασιλικός is indeed God's Law, at the same time it is further qualified by the love command as I have already pointed out.

Νόμος τέλειος, νόμος ἐλευθερίας and νόμος βασιλικός in James thus hold the meaning of a Law with divine authority, God's Law, that is summed

²⁹⁹ In agreement with Johnson, *The Letter of James*, 230; Hartin, *James*, 135. Johnson suggests that "the close proximity to *basileia* in 2:5 suggests a reading like 'law of the kingdom'", see Johnson, *The Letter of James*, 230.

³⁰⁰ The same ambiguity is seen in Reicke, see Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, 29.

³⁰¹ Cheung, *Genre, Composition and Hermeneutics*, 97.

³⁰² Moo understands the royal Law in Jas 2:8 to be the "sum total of demands that God, through Jesus, imposes on believers", see Moo, *The Letter of James*, 112.

up and should be understood in the light of the love command as seen in Lev 19:18:

Ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτὸν ἐγὼ εἰμι κύριος (LXX).

You shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the LORD.

In sum, *the quintessence of the royal Law is the love command, hence to fulfil the royal Law is to act according to the love command.*³⁰³

The author of James does not only have this theological point from Leviticus 19. It is also in accordance with Jesus' teaching, see especially the Sermon on the Mount and Mark 12:28–31 with parallel in Matt 22:35–40 (Luke 10:25–28).³⁰⁴ Matt 22:35–40 and Mark 12:28–31 are about the dispute between the scribes and Jesus where Jesus is asked which of the commandments is the first. His answer is of course the *shema*, but then he adds the love commandment from Leviticus 19, and concludes in the Markan version, "There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:31b), and in the Matthean version, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt 22:40). This is relevant to the fulfilment of the royal Law in James. As I said earlier, my interpretation of Jas 2:8 is that the quintessence of the royal Law according to James is the love command. Though James does not refer to the *shema*, his understanding is still in accord with Jesus'. One might say that James' understanding of the Law is based on Jesus' teaching, and the love command represents both the fulfilment of the Law *and* the quintessence of the Law. As mentioned earlier, this does not mean that the single commandments of the Law have been set aside, but that they are to be emphasised and ranked through the love command. For the author of James this has as a consequence that to live according to the love command is in effect to fulfil the whole Law; however, to fulfil single commandments of the Law does not necessarily have the same effect regarding the love command. It is possible to fulfil single commandments without fulfilling the love command.

In addition to this, James is also in accord with Paul on this point, see e.g. Rom 13:8–10:

⁸ Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and

³⁰³ In agreement with Reicke, see Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, 29.

³⁰⁴ James draws on Jesus' teaching, and the understanding of the Law in James as fulfilled through the love command is a clear example of Jesus tradition in James.

any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbour as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

The love command is here explicitly understood as the fulfilment of the Law, and the Law is summed up in the love command. This is very much the same understanding as I have seen in James, and we can safely say that James again is in accord with central Jewish-Christian teaching about the centrality of the love command.³⁰⁵

With regard to Leviticus 19 there are some further observations that are significant for vv. 8 and 9 as well as for vv. 2–4. Leviticus 19 represents a central chapter in the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17–26 with an addendum in chapter 27), which is a "coherent collection of commandments".³⁰⁶ In the structure of Leviticus 19 there are three sets of laws: vv. 3–18, vv. 19–29 and vv. 30–36.³⁰⁷ For Jas 2:8–9, the textual unit of Lev 19:3–18 is the more interesting. More specifically Lev 19:9–18 can be divided into five sets of prohibitions and commandments: vv. 9–10, vv. 11–12, vv. 13–14, vv. 15–16 and vv. 17–18.³⁰⁸ As mentioned earlier, these five strophes all end with the formula 'I am the Lord', thus underlining the divine authority. The fourth strophe (vv. 15–16) concerns dealings at court and just judgement is central. Partiality, on the other hand, is condemned. I have shown that rabbinic teaching concerning this strophe is also relevant, especially regarding Jas 2:4. In addition the strophe is directly relevant for Jas 2:9. The issue of partial treatment of persons is repeated there and serves as a contrast to the love command in Jas 2:8. The last strophe in Lev 19:9–18, vv. 17–18, is as we have seen already the one that James, Jesus and Paul draw on in their reception of the love command:

¹⁷ You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbour, or you will incur guilt yourself. ¹⁸ You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the LORD.

³⁰⁵ Dibelius' perspective is that the question at hand concerns the whole Law, not single commandments. He says: "Das Prädikat 'königlich' eignet dem ganzen Gesetz. Aber es ist ein christliches Gesetz und wird darum nicht durch Peinlichkeit in den kleinen Dingen, sondern durch Erfüllung des großen Liebesgebotes befolgt", see Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 179.

³⁰⁶ Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination*, 71. Leviticus 1–16 is concerned with the general holiness of Israel, whereas the Holiness Code is concerned with Yahweh's own holiness.

³⁰⁷ John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, WBC, vol. 4 (Dallas: Word Books, 1992), 307f.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

The context is conflicts between neighbours, but the love command in v. 18 is also “a basic principle for interpersonal relationships”.³⁰⁹ Now through the teaching of Jesus it has also become a basic principle for the interpretation and fulfilment of God’s Law:

It is reasonable to suppose that the prominence of a command to love in many of the NT documents is due to its prominence in the teaching of Jesus, even when this is not explicitly acknowledged. If so, it is probable that when James quotes Lev. xix. 18 as *scripture* he does so in the knowledge that this scripture has received the added authority of Jesus’ use. It is unlikely that the description of the law as *royal* involves anything so specific as a recognition of Jesus as the king who has promulgated the law, especially as it is God who is said to promise the kingdom in ii. 5 (cf. iv. 12: there is only one lawgiver; clearly God). Lev. xix. 18 is for James the *royal law* because it is the law of the kingdom of God; but as in ii. 5 he would be conscious that Jesus proclaimed God’s promise, so here he will be conscious that Jesus proclaimed God’s kingdom and its law. So then, James concludes, if his readers are prey to the sin of discrimination, they are *convicted* by the royal law of Lev. xix. 18 itself, and are found to be *transgressors* of it.³¹⁰

If the addressees lived by the love command they would not have honoured the equestrian instead of the beggar.³¹¹ They would have honoured both. Hence, again it becomes clear that the Jewish-Christian heritage of the assembly is in deep conflict with the Roman cultural context. If the members of the assembly were living according to the love command, they would have acted accordingly, and that would have been irreconcilable with Roman etiquette in this particular case where both an equestrian and a beggar enter the assembly.

As I turn now to the rest of the *exornatio*, namely vv. 9–11, we will see that it completes the line of thought of v. 8. The rest of the *exornatio* explicitly states that partiality is a transgression of the Law that will lead to condemnation according to the Law, and that if you break one part of the Law you have broken the whole Law. So when the addressees are treating someone with partiality, that single transgression is in fact a transgression of the whole Law as summed up in the love command. In order to examine the nuances of this argumentation more carefully I shall

³⁰⁹ Cheung, *Genre, Composition and Hermeneutics*, 102.

³¹⁰ Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 110. (Emphasis by Laws, I have substituted italics for her bold types).

³¹¹ Adamson puts it rather amusingly: “No sane man could have pretended even to himself that the conduct of 2:1–4 was a way of fulfilling the law of love”, see Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, 113.

first investigate the intertexture of ἁμαρτία and παραβάτης in v. 9, and then the intertexture of the single commandments referred to in vv. 10–11.

Intertexture of ἁμαρτία and παραβάτης (v. 9)

I have already shown the connection between Leviticus 19 and Jas 2:9 and that Jas 2:9 refers to partiality in the assembly and hence links to vv. 2–4. In addition I have shown the utter contrast of the *topos* of v. 8 and the *topos* of v. 9. I shall now have a look at ἁμαρτία and παραβάτης in v. 9:

Εἰ δὲ προσωπολημπτεῖτε, ἁμαρτίαν ἐργάζεσθε ἐλεγχόμενοι ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου ὡς παραβάται.

But if on the other hand you show partiality, you commit a sin and thus will be condemned by the Law as transgressors.

According to *BDAG*, παραβάτης in non-biblical literature is normally a warrior beside the charioteer; however, in biblical literature its only meaning is violator or transgressor,³¹² which has the same meaning as a sinner, since the sin is a transgression of God's Law and commandments, see Rom 2:25,27; Luke 6:4; Gal 2:18.³¹³ This links παραβάτης to ἁμαρτία.

The word ἁμαρτία itself can according to *BDAG* have several meanings ranging from involuntary mistake or error to serious offences against a deity.³¹⁴ In the New Testament ἁμαρτία basically designates either a) "a departure from either human or divine standards of uprightness", b) "a state of being sinful", or c) "a destructive evil power".³¹⁵ In Jas 2:9ff. ἁμαρτία is a dramatic departure from divine standards. It is a transgression of God's Law, hence an offence against God himself.³¹⁶ By not living according to the love command, the assembly is breaking God's Law. This is an offence against God. Partiality is a sin and a transgression of the Law because partiality shows that the assembly is not living according to the love command.

In v. 8 the point was that to love your neighbour as yourself is to do well. In v. 9 the main point is that partiality is a sin and a transgression

³¹² See the article on παραβάτης in Danker, ed. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 759. According to Moo, 'transgressor' is the technical New Testament term "for a person who directly disobeys a positive command", see Moo, *The Letter of James*, 113.

³¹³ See the article on παραβάτης in Danker, ed. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 759.

³¹⁴ See the article on ἁμαρτία in *Ibid.*, 50f.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

³¹⁶ This is also the perspective in Rom 2:23: To break the Law is to dishonour God.

of the Law, and it is not without consequence. Quite to the contrary, if you do show partiality, you will be condemned according to the Law of God as transgressors, ἐλεγχόμενοι ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου ὡς παραβάται. Until now the whole point of James' argument has been that partiality is a sin, i.e. an offence against God. Living according to Roman etiquette automatically makes you a sinner according to God's Law because Roman society is built upon partiality. What is acceptable in Roman society is unacceptable according to the Law of God. The Roman etiquette of partiality is an offence against God and a transgression of the love command. Even so, the assembly practices this, and consequently, they will be condemned by the Law. James' alternative comes from their Jewish-Christian background, and it is to live according to the love command.

In extension of this, what does it mean to be condemned (ἐλέγχω) by the Law? In the LXX ἐλέγχω and cognates are used for several Hebrew stems. The relevant stem in our context is to 'condemn' or to 'convict', נָשַׁךְ.³¹⁷ The general meaning in the New Testament is "to show someone his [or her] sin and to summon him [or her] to repentance".³¹⁸ The verb, ἐλέγχω, also has the meaning to 'reprove' (cf. Matt 18:15) or to 'refute' (cf. Tit 1:9); however, the legal meaning to 'convict' is also found in e.g. John 8:46, 16:8, 1 Cor 14:24, Jude 15.³¹⁹ The use of ἐλέγχω seems to imply educational discipline.³²⁰ In Jas 2:9 it may seem as if the Law is personified, and acts as a judge.³²¹ The Law represents God. Hence, to be condemned by the Law is to be summoned by God to repentance.

Intertexture of the Single Commandments in vv. 10–11

James has established that partiality is an offence against God. Partiality is also a transgression of the love command. Since the whole Law is summed up and fulfilled in the love command, breaking this commandment is equivalent to breaking the whole Law.³²² James goes on to sharpen his argument further in vv. 10–11. If you keep every single commandment of

³¹⁷ Friedrich Büchsel, "ἐλέγχω κτλ." in TDNT, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, vol. II, 473–476, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 473.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 474.

³¹⁹ Moo, *The Letter of James*, 113.

³²⁰ Büchsel, "ἐλέγχω κτλ." 474.

³²¹ Hartin, *James*, 135.

³²² In agreement with Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 158 and 179.

the Law, yet do not live according to the love command, you have actually broken the whole Law, because the lawgiver is the same, namely God.³²³

¹⁰ "Ὅστις γὰρ ὅλον τὸν νόμον τηρήσῃ πταίσῃ δὲ ἐν ἐνί, γέγονεν πάντων ἔνοχος. ¹¹ ὁ γὰρ εἰπὼν· μὴ μοιχεύσῃς, εἶπεν καὶ· μὴ φονεύσῃς· εἰ δὲ οὐ μοιχεύεις φονεύεις δέ, γέγονας παραβάτης νόμου.

¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole Law, but in one [point] fails, he has become liable of [it] all.³²⁴ ¹¹ For the one who said, "You shall not commit adultery", he also said, "You shall not murder". But if you do not commit adultery, but you murder, you have become a transgressor of the Law.

The single commandments given in v. 11 are also central to Jesus and Paul. I have already cited Rom 13:8–10 where Paul exposes the love command as both the sum of the Law and the fulfilment of the Law. Before he says that the Law is summed up in the love command, he lists several of the commandments in Rom 13:9:

The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet'; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'

Moreover, this directly reflects teaching from Jesus. Again the Sermon on the Mount is echoed, Matt 5:17–19:

¹⁷ 'Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil. ¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

The two first anti thesis in Matt 5:21–26 and 27–30:

²¹ You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, "You shall not murder"; and "whoever murders shall be liable to judgment." ²² But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, "You fool," you will be liable to the hell of fire. ²³ So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister

³²³ Reicke is of the opinion that vv. 10f indicate "that among the readers there was an effort to observe the revealed law after the Jewish pattern. The author points out that such zealots for the law do not keep the law, since they violate it at a basic point", see Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, 29.

³²⁴ The syntactical structure of the ὅστις-sentence, with aorist subjunctive, indicates a hypothetical nature of the setting. Here I am in agreement with Moo, *The Letter of James*, 114.

has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. ²⁶ Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

²⁷ You have heard that it was said, “You shall not commit adultery.” ²⁸ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.

And Matt 7:12:

In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.

In Mark 10:19, with parallel in Matt 19:18 and Luke 18:20, in the context of the story of the rich man (in Luke a rich ruler) who asks Jesus what he shall do to inherit eternal life, the same commandments as in Romans 13 are repeated. Two of these are the same as those listed by James: “you shall not commit adultery” and “you shall not murder”. These commandments belong to the Decalogue (cf. Deut 5:17–21 and Exod 20:13–17).³²⁵ The important point here is that in a Jewish context, if you were citing one, two or three commandments, you were basically referring to the whole Law.³²⁶ When Jesus cites these commandments to the rich man, he is in fact referring to the whole Law, and the whole Law is summed up and fulfilled in the love command. The same is the fact when Paul refers to these single commandments. He is indeed referring to the whole Law as fulfilled in the love command.

Hence, Jas 2:11 underlines the point from v. 10: although you keep every single commandment of the Law, yet fail in one point of the Law, namely

³²⁵ Here it is interesting to note that the order of the commandments in James, Paul and Luke are slightly different from LXX, Mark and Matthew. The latter put ‘you shall not murder’ before ‘you shall not commit adultery’, in accordance with LXX, whereas James, Paul and Luke refer to these commandments the other way around. However, I do not think that the order of the commandments is the central point here.

³²⁶ Mussner is of the opinion that the specific commandments are chosen “[w]eil die Verweigerung der Nächstenliebe schon in der vorausliegenden Tradition als eine Art von Mord verstanden wurde; vgl. Sir 34,26”, see Mussner, *Der Jakobusbrief*, 126.

the love command, you have transgressed against the whole Law.³²⁷ The single commandments that James lists in relation to the rest of the Law are well known in a Jewish-Christian context, so when James refers to two commandments, his readers or hearers will immediately understand his argument. The reason James has chosen commandments from the Decalogue is probably due to the dignity and importance of the Decalogue in the Jewish-Christian tradition.³²⁸

One may ask, however: why has he chosen exactly these commandments? As I have illustrated above, other New Testament writers have made the same selection, so one may conclude that this belonged to the Jewish heritage.³²⁹ However, in a Jewish context, when making the same point as James—if you transgress against one single commandment of the Law, you transgress against the whole entity of the Law—one would normally quote a ‘light’ commandment and a ‘heavy’ commandment, whereas James quotes two ‘heavy’ commandments.³³⁰ It has been suggested that precisely these two commandments were chosen because they both belonged to the second table of the Decalogue, and the love command was closely associated with these.³³¹ On the basis of the significance of the love command to the interpretation of Jas 2:1–13, this seems like a relevant point of view. James’ main point is that whether you break the commandment about murder or about adultery, or you show partiality, these are all transgressions against the royal Law, the love command.³³²

Ideological Texture: ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτὸν

The *exornatio* also represents the postcolonial alternative for James. He has continually illuminated the wrongdoings of his addressees by giving them rhetorical questions that shows them that they are putting their trust to the wrong power, the colonising power. His alternative is to fulfil the royal law. “You shall love your neighbour as yourself” is his final state-

³²⁷ The law is not only a series of individual commandments. The single commandments are all representative of the whole law, see Moo, *The Letter of James*, 114f; Hartin, *James*, 137.

³²⁸ In agreement with Martin Klein, “Ein vollkommenes Werk”: *Vollkommenheit, Gesetz und Gericht als theologische Themen des Jakobusbriefes*, BWA(N)T, vol. 19 (139) (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1995), 147.

³²⁹ See Baasland, *Jakobsbrevet*, 70, who says that it was a well-known point of view among Jews, Stoics and Christians in the first century that if you transgress against one commandment (virtue among the Stoics), you transgress against them all.

³³⁰ Moo, *The Letter of James*, 115f; Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 113.

³³¹ See Moo, *The Letter of James*, 116; Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 113f; Burchard, *Der Jakobusbrief*, 107.

³³² In agreement with Baasland, *Jakobsbrevet*, 70.

ment of what is the real centre and what is the real power. One may say that for his addressees Rome is the centre to which they turn, whereas everything else, including their own Christian heritage, is the margin. James tries to change this by putting their Christian faith in the centre and thus defining Rome, the political power, as the margin. Figuratively speaking, Jerusalem represents the alternative centre for the author of the Epistle of James. Thus, a postcolonial perspective on Jas 2 shows us centres in conflict: Rome as the political centre versus Jerusalem as the religious centre.

Summary of vv. 8–11

Jas 2:8–11 further confirms the argument that the author has already established: The addressees of the Epistle act wrongly according to their Jewish-Christian background when they show partiality in the assembly. They act according to Roman etiquette rather than Christian standards. James argues against their actions from a Jewish-Christian point of view and tells them that their partiality makes them evil-thinking judges (v. 4). He refers to Jesus' teaching to show them that the very one they are dishonouring is the one they should honour because the beggar is part of a group chosen by God.

In vv. 8–9 James then shows them that by acting within Roman cultural etiquette, they actually become transgressors of the royal Law. They break with Jesus' commands and understanding of the Law. By acting as Romans they do not live according to the love command which is the fulfilment of the Law and the alternative James gives them. This could mean that the addressees have two major entities to relate to: a) the Christian teaching of the royal Law, love your neighbour as yourself, and b) the Roman Empire and Roman etiquette. If they abide by one, they transgress against the other. If they abide by the royal Law, they transgress against the Empire. If they abide by Roman etiquette, they transgress against the love command and through this the whole Law, and can be condemned by the Law.

Vv. 10–11 further sharpen this argument. It does not help to keep every single commandment of the Law if you transgress against the love command. This is the fulfilment of the Law and the quintessence of the Law, and all the other commandments should be emphasised and ranked accordingly.³³³ Hence, the partiality that the assembly has shown has made them transgressors of the whole Law.

³³³ See Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 69: "In 2,8–11 wird das Liebesgebot aus Lev 19,18 (genauso wie in Mt 22,39–40) als oberstes Gebot in dem Sinne

VERSES 12–13—CONPLEXIO

¹² Οὕτως λαλεῖτε καὶ οὕτως ποιεῖτε ὡς διὰ νόμου ἐλευθερίας μέλλοντες κρίνεσθαι.

¹³ ἢ γὰρ κρίσις ἀνέλεος τῷ μὴ ποιήσαντι ἔλεος· κατακαυχᾶται ἔλεος κρίσεως.

¹² Thus speak and so act as those who are about to be judged by the Law of liberty. ¹³ For the judgement is merciless towards him who did not show mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgement.

Inner Texture

On an inner textual level one can say that the conclusion of the *complexio*, v. 12, serves as a natural consequence of the argument of vv. 8–11: if you—by keeping the royal Law—are doing well, naturally you should act and speak accordingly, i.e. as those who are about to be judged by the Law of liberty.³³⁴ V. 12 takes the form of an exhortation,³³⁵ and it is a conclusion and a natural consequence of the whole argument in Jas 2:1–13. James has all through the textual unit argued with the following perspective: The cultural etiquette of the Roman society concerning partial treatment is in direct conflict with the etiquette of Jewish-Christian teaching. The assembly belongs to the Jewish-Christian tradition, but still they are living by the norms of Roman society. They are perfectly aware that they really should live by the norms of their Jewish-Christian heritage, yet they do not. In short they are not practising what they are preaching, and there is a discrepancy between doing and hearing the word (Jas 1:22) and a discrepancy between faith and works (2:14). James' alternative and the consequence of his previous argument is expressed directly in v. 12: "Thus speak and so act as those who are about to be judged by the Law of liberty."

At the same time as the verse serves as a conclusion to the previous argument of James, it also links forward to the theme of words and deeds in Jas 2:14–26. The call of v. 12, to speak and act in accordance with the Law of liberty, is a direct contrast to v. 14:

gefasst, dass von ihm absteigend auch die anderen Gebote (des Dekalogs) gewichtet, aber nicht ersetzt werden. Jakobus will den βασιλικὸς νόμος Gottes und seines Christus durch die Christen nicht eklektisch, sondern *ganz* gehalten wissen (2,10). Er sieht die Christen durch die Taufe (vgl. 2,7) in den vollendeten Gesetzesgehorsam eingestiftet, und das Liebesgebot wird im Sinne Jesu als entscheidende Summe des Gotteswillens angesehen." (*italics* by Stuhlmacher).

³³⁴ I have previously shown that 'perfect Law', 'Law of liberty' and 'royal Law' are parallel terms and represent three aspects of James' understanding of the Law.

³³⁵ Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 116.

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you *say* you have faith but do not have *works*? Can faith save you?³³⁶

Although there is much to be said about Jas 2:14–26, the main argument is that of Jas 2:12: what you say and what you practise must be in accordance with the Law of liberty, i.e. the love command. In other words, faith and practice must be linked together as a unity. If your actions contradict your faith, they undermine your faith and your credibility as a Christian. The example that James uses in vv. 15–16 is a striking parallel to vv. 2–4 in the sense that it has to do with how the Christians are to treat the absolute poor. Hence, in Jas 2:1–13 James shows the assembly that their actions are wrong and that they through these actions have not only broken one commandment but the whole royal Law. They have not lived by the love command in their dealings with persons of different rank. This is summed up in v. 12 by the simple statement that they should act and speak as if they were about to be judged by the Law of liberty. When this point is further developed in vv. 14–26, the first example given is again an example about how to treat a representative of the absolute poor. Hence it is apparent that the absolute poor are very important when it comes to faith. How you treat them is also a test of your faith.

The premises of the *epicheireme* are found in v. 13: the major premise is: “For the judgement is merciless towards him who did not show mercy”, while the minor premise is: “Mercy triumphs over judgement”.³³⁷ On an inner textual level these two premises are also linked to the previous verses. By their actions the members of the assembly have shown that they are merciless towards the beggar, the one that they according to their own teaching most definitely should have shown mercy. This action has a consequence, namely punishment that is merciless. As they have been merciless, the punishment towards them shall be equally merciless. On the other hand, the minor premise is that mercy triumphs over judgement, i.e. if they had shown mercy by treating the beggar and the equestrian equally, mercy would have triumphed over judgement. If they had acted according to the love command, they would have shown mercy and would have received mercy themselves. This action would have prevented judgement against them, and therefore they should speak and act as if they were judged by the Law of liberty.

³³⁶ Italics mine.

³³⁷ Watson, “James 2 in Light of Greco-Roman Schemes of Argumentation,” 107.; Wachob, *The voice of Jesus in the social rhetoric of James*, 107.

Let me first explore further the intertexture between Jas 2:12, 1:25 and 2:8 in relation to this important phrase, ‘judged by the Law of liberty’, and in relation to the term κρίσις (punishment/judgement). After that I shall investigate further the other key terms in v. 13, ἔλεος (mercy) and ἀνέλος (merciless).

Intertexture of κρίνομαι (v. 12) and κρίσις (v. 13)

As I have already shown in the exegesis of v. 8, there are three distinct qualifications of νόμος in James: The perfect Law in 1:25, νόμος τέλειος; the Law of liberty in 1:25 and 2:12, νόμος ἐλευθερίας; and the royal Law in 2:8, νόμος βασιλικός. These three qualifications should be read together, and together they show us James’ understanding of the Law:³³⁸

- a) The perfect Law, νόμος τέλειος, is perfect because it is God’s Law. In other words perfect refers to the lawgiver, namely God.
- b) The Law of liberty, νόμος ἐλευθερίας, can be understood both on the basis of Stoic philosophy and Old Testament thought about free obedience of the Law, as well as Old Testament thought about the Levitical Jubilee. Hence, the Law of liberty, which also is the perfect Law or God’s Law, is a law that is summed up in the love command: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”
- c) The royal Law, νόμος βασιλικός, should equally be understood as the Law from the Kingdom of heaven, the Law from God. It is further qualified in v. 8 by the love command.

Νόμος τέλειος, νόμος ἐλευθερίας and νόμος βασιλικός in James hold the meaning of a Law with divine authority, God’s Law, that is summed up and should be understood in the light of the love command as seen in Lev 19:18. Hence I have argued that the quintessence of the Law in James is the love command. Therefore to be judged by the Law of liberty is to have one’s actions judged according to the love command.

What does ‘judgement’ mean here? In a profane sense κρίσις can be understood as separating or distinguishing, or the judgement of a court, trial suit, event or issue.³³⁹ The term is used frequently in the LXX, mostly

³³⁸ The argumentation for these main points can be found in the section ‘Intertexture of νόμος (v. 8)’.

³³⁹ See the article on κρίσις in Liddell, Scott, and Jones, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 997.

for the Hebrew term מִשְׁפָּט. Therefore it “carries the sense of the right, especially the right of the oppressed which is vindicated by the Judge”.³⁴⁰ In that sense the term seems to be somewhat parallel to ἔλεος, a term used in Jas 2:13. However, in the New Testament κρίσις usually means the ‘decision of the judge’, i.e. ‘judgement’.³⁴¹ According to *BDAG* the use of κρίσις in Jas 2:13 should indeed be understood in the general sense of judging or judgement. More specifically it is used “of the activity of God or the Messiah as judge, especially on the Last Day”,³⁴² and “the word often means *judgement* that goes against a person, *condemnation*, and the *sentence* that follows”.³⁴³ Here we see that the connotations to the word have become something quite different from the connotations to the Hebrew term מִשְׁפָּט. While the Hebrew term carries undertones of ‘vindication’, the general usage in the New Testament carries undertones of ‘condemnation’. This last aspect is also in accord with being condemned by the Law as transgressors in Jas 2:9. In addition it is the perspective of the word used in Jas 5:12 which means to ‘fall under condemnation’.

While the term κρίσις in v. 13 certainly carries implications of condemnation, it seems to me that the related term κρίνομαι in v. 12 should not be subsumed under the same rubric. Its immediate textual context does not warrant an interpretation that leans too heavily towards either ‘vindication’ or ‘condemnation’. Rather, it seems to me that the author of James in v. 12 is using a term that carries multiple possible outcomes, and in his use of the term he retains this open-endedness. He points towards possible condemnation with κρίσις in the next sentence, v. 13a: ‘For the judgement is merciless towards him who did not show mercy.’ But he also points towards possible acquittal, or vindication, in his exhortation, v. 12a: ‘Thus speak and so act as those who are about to be judged’, i.e. so that you might not be judged and condemned, but rather judged and acquitted. The author might be seeking to make his hearers/readers face the question of judgement on a different basis than they are used to. In a loose paraphrasing, he might be saying in v. 12: ‘If you stop showing partiality, you fear that you will be judged (and *condemned*) by Roman society. But I tell you that if you stop showing partiality, you will be judged (and *vindicated*) by the Law of liberty.’

³⁴⁰ Büchsel, “κρίνω κτλ.” 941f.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 941.

³⁴² Danker, ed. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 569.

³⁴³ *Ibid.* (italics by Danker).

The author's argument does not end there, however. His use of the terms κρίνομαι and κρίσις is ultimately meant to highlight the key term ἔλεος (mercy) in v. 13.

Intertexture of ἔλεος and ἀνέλος (v. 13)

V. 13 reads:

Ἡ γὰρ κρίσις ἀνέλεος τῷ μὴ ποιήσαντι ἔλεος· κατακαυχᾶται ἔλεος κρίσεως.

For the judgement is merciless towards him who did not show mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgement.

On an inner textual level it seems that mercy, ἔλεος, is a parallel term to the Law of liberty in v. 12, which again is closely linked to the love command as I have already argued. Mercy as the expression of God's will is shown in the love command: "you shall love your neighbour as yourself."³⁴⁴

In other biblical texts, ἔλεος is both used about God who shows mercy and about individual persons who show mercy.³⁴⁵ In Matt 23:23 ἔλεος stands in connection with κρίσις in the same way as in Jas 2:13; however κρίσις in Matt 23:23 has the typical Old Testament meaning of justice rather than judgement. Πίστις is also connected to ἔλεος and κρίσις in Matt 23:23, and the context is the 'weightier matters of the Law'. Κρίσις (κρίμα) and ἔλεος (ἔλεον) are found standing together in Zech 7:8–10, Mic 6:8, Hos 12:7, Jer 9:23, Pss 88:15 (LXX) and 100:1 (LXX). Κρίσις is found in Isa 1:7 and Jer 22:3, whereas ἔλεος is found in Hos 6:6. Main ideas here are that righteousness, justice, mercy and kindness are the opposite of oppression. If you show mercy, kindness and so on, you also treat widows, orphans and poor accordingly. These are also matters central to Jas 1:26f.³⁴⁶

The theology of the 'weightier matters of the Law' has its biblical background in the previously mentioned biblical texts. This is relevant to James as well, since mercy, ἔλεος, plays such an important role in v. 13. Let me therefore have a further look at the idea of the 'weightier matters of the Law'. Rabbi Hillel's opinion was that the essence of the Law could be summarised as follows: love towards God fosters mercy towards your

³⁴⁴ According to Johnson, ἔλεος is also found in Graeco-Roman writings, and then "directly connected to the helping of the poor", see Johnson, *The Letter of James*, 234.

³⁴⁵ With God as a subject, see e.g. Luke 1:72; 2 Tim 1:16. With a person as a subject, see e.g. Luke 10:36f.

³⁴⁶ "26 If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. 27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world."

fellow human beings,³⁴⁷ hence this is a weighty matter of the Law. The love command would foster mercy, which is one of the important matters of the Law. So, to show mercy, which is a consequence of acting according to the love command, is one of the most important matters of the Law. The expression itself, weighty matter, comes from the rabbinic *מצוות חמורות* which is in contrast to the light matters of the Law, *מצוות קלות*.³⁴⁸ Luz says that the three designations of the weighty matters of the Law that we have in Matt 23:23, namely *ἔλεος*, *κρίσις* and *πίστις* together carry the meaning of the greatest commandment, love towards God and your neighbour (Matt 5:21–26, 43–48; 7:12; 22:34–40).³⁴⁹

If we have a look at the epistles, we see that *ἔλεος* in some of them stands together with *χάρις* and *εἰρήνη*.³⁵⁰ This, combined with the idea of the weighty matters of the Law, shows that *ἔλεος* is closely connected with *κρίσις*, *πίστις*, *χάρις* and *εἰρήνη*. Justice, faith, grace and mercy are aspects of the same religious idea, which is not quite complete without the love command.

This is illustrated especially well in a central text from the New Testament (in addition to Matt 23:23) that links mercy together with the love command, or rather together with the double love command, namely Luke 10:36f. I have already referred to Luke 10 in the exegesis of Jas 2:8 regarding the love command. The context is that a *νομικός*, i.e. a person who knows the Mosaic Law well, tests Jesus by asking him what he has to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus' answer is in the form of a question: "What is written in the Law?" (Luke 10:26). The answer that the *νομικός* gives Jesus is the double love command in Luke 10:27:

He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself."

However, the *νομικός* does not stop there; he pursues his questions by asking who he should consider his neighbour, and that is when Jesus answers with the parable of the good Samaritan and then asks the *νομικός*: "Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" (Luke 10:36). The answer of the *νομικός* is "The one

³⁴⁷ Tord Fornberg, *Matteusevangeliet: 13:53—28:20*, Kommentar till Nya Testamentet, vol. 1b (Stockholm: Verbum, 1999), 398.

³⁴⁸ Ulrich Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (Mt 18–25)*, EKKNT, vol. I/3 (Zürich: Benziger 1997), 332.

³⁴⁹ See Ibid., 333: "Zusammen meinen die drei Ausdrücke nichts anderes als das, was Matthäus als oberstes Gebot bezeichnet hatte, nämlich die Liebe."

³⁵⁰ See 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; 2 John 3.

who showed him mercy (ἔλεος)" (Luke 10:37).³⁵¹ From this we can see that mercy and acting according to the love command are the same. "Being 'merciful' [...] is not merely a feeling of concern, but involves actively reaching out to show love to others."³⁵²

The consequence this has for the interpretation of James is that if the people of the assembly did well by living according to the love command, as they were told to do in v. 8, they would automatically also show mercy, since mercy is connected to the love command. They would also be just when judging others, as opposed to their unjust judgement of the beggar as shown in vv. 2–4. They would show grace, be peaceful and have faith in God rather than in the Emperor. If they however do not show mercy, the punishment shall be merciless. If they do not show mercy, they are in effect acting without justice, grace, peace and faith, not to mention that they are not living in accordance with the love command. Is this not exactly what the assembly has previously been accused of? Yes, indeed it is. As we have seen in vv. 8–9, partiality and the love command are in direct contrast with each other. The love command is irreconcilable with partiality. Still, the assembly is showing partiality by giving the equestrian an honourable seat whereas the beggar must stand or sit under a footstool. In other words, they are actually not showing mercy.³⁵³

The punishment shall be merciless, ἀνέλεος. What does that mean in this context? The only example given of the word in *BDAG*, *LSJ* and *EDNT* is from Jas 2:13.³⁵⁴ The adjective ἀνελεήμων is mainly used about merciless persons, not about merciless judgement.³⁵⁵ Within our text unit merciless punishment must apparently be understood in parallel with v. 9, i.e. the verse that deals with being condemned by the Law as a transgressor. The one who has not shown mercy has accordingly broken God's Law, hence should be condemned by this law. The author uses an unusually harsh choice of words in an attempt to convey the gravity of this situation: 'the judgement is merciless'. In this way he suggests that God will be merciless towards the one who does not show mercy.

³⁵¹ In Greek: ὁ ποιήσας τὸ ἔλεος μετ' αὐτοῦ.

³⁵² Moo, *The Letter of James*, 118.

³⁵³ Maynard-Reid, *Poverty and Wealth in James*, 66.

³⁵⁴ See the article on ἀνέλεος in Danker, ed. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 77; Liddell, Scott, and Jones, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 131; Horst Balz, "ἀνέλεος" in *EDNT*, ed. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, vol. 1, 96, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 96.

³⁵⁵ See Prov 5:9; 11:17; 12:10; 17:11; 27:4; Job 19:13 and Rom 1:31.

The latter sentence of v. 13 may be interpreted as a mirror of the former, so that the meaning, loosely paraphrased, becomes: “If you are merciless, God will be merciless towards you. If however you do show mercy, God does so as well (i.e. he will not judge you).” There is no punishment according to the Law if you do show mercy, i.e. mercy triumphs over judgement. To some extent this interpretation is supported by the Jesus tradition. Although the term *ἐλεος* is not used in Matt 7:1–2 with parallel in Luke 6:37–38, the subject matter of course is the same: “Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgement you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get” (Matt 7:1–2). The same is the case in Matt 6:14–15 and 18:21–35.

If we read v. 13 carefully, however, it becomes clear that this interpretation is not self-evident, and that the last sentence may perhaps better be left intentionally more ambiguous. There are two textual reasons for this, quite apart from the theological issues raised. First, the grammatical variations over the word judgement (*κρίσις* in v. 13a; *κρίσεως* in v. 13b) seem to refer to the same event, which makes it necessary to consider the reading: “the judgement is merciless . . . Mercy triumphs over judgement [which is merciless].” If mercy triumphs over merciless judgement, does the merciless judgement still stand? Second, the term ‘triumph’ is not one that is usually associated with people’s relation to God, and so this would render problematic the interpretation that people who show mercy ‘triumph’ over God’s judgement, and hence ‘triumph’ over God himself.

Given these two observations, it seems that the sentence in v. 13b introduces a shade of ambiguity that in some sense responds to the harsh words in v. 13a. While the mercy that triumphs in v. 13b does not seem to cancel out the merciless judgement in v. 13a, it nevertheless may be a way for the author to lift the eyes of the reader/hearer up and above what he has just said, so that the ultimate horizon extends beyond that of merciless judgement and towards an ultimate horizon of mercy. It may also be a way of letting the picture in v. 13a, which relies heavily on the rule of “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth”, become ever so slightly infused with some of the logic of the gospel message, with its new understanding of weighty matters. Thus while there is sufficient basis in the Jesus tradition to affirm the interpretation that v. 13b may mirror v. 13a (i.e. if you are merciless, God will be merciless; if you show mercy, God will show mercy), there also seem to be grounds for allowing v. 13b to retain more of the ambiguity that its textual structure displays—and which, in other ways, draws on logic inherent in the Jesus tradition.

Ideological Texture: ἔλεος—ἀνέλος

The binary ἔλεος—ἀνέλος is from a postcolonial perspective a continuation and conclusion of the former binaries of coloniser—colonised, power—powerless, centre—margin, honour—shame and rich—poor. James' main point has all the time been that the Christian assembly should follow their own faith and put that in the centre, instead of following the political centre of Rome. He has used these binaries throughout his argument to show that the power, the honour, the wealth and thus the centre is not Rome, but their own Christian faith and the fulfilment of the royal Law through the love command. Now, through the binary ἔλεος—ἀνέλος James concludes his argument. Mercy is what comes out of the Christian faith. Mercy is the practical consequence of neighbour love. Mercyless acts are what the coloniser would do. Mercyless acts are what comes out of putting Rome at the centre.

Summary of vv. 12–13

The *complexio* of Jas 2:12–13 offers a brief conclusion to the textual unit that is a natural consequence of the previous verses and that points forward to vv. 14–26. It is a natural consequence of the previous verses in the sense that the assembly has not acted according to their faith, to put it in a rephrased version of v. 12. They do not live as they teach. By living as Romans they have treated people with partiality which is in direct conflict with the love command. To speak and to act as if judged by the Law of liberty is to act according to the love command, and that would have as a consequence that they would not show partiality but mercy. If the assembly had shown mercy, they would not have been judged. However, in the way they have acted, they have not shown mercy and the consequence is that they themselves shall be judged without mercy. The consequence of partiality is merciless judgement by God. The consequence of living according to Roman cultural etiquette is that God in his judgement shall not show mercy. The last sentence remains ambiguous, but seeks above all to highlight the importance of mercy.

INTERPRETATIVE RESULTS

My main contribution in this historical exegesis is the identification of the ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος as an equestrian seeking political office, and the πτωχός as a beggar. Although some few scholars have suggested this identification of the ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος, see note 91 in chapter five, none

of them have argued as thoroughly as I have for this view. Neither have any of them shown the role of the equestrian order in the first century Roman society and linked that to an interpretation of Jas 2:1–13. One of my main contributions to Jamesian research is to make an interpretative point out of this specific identification of the ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος and the πτωχός.

The main point of Jas 2:1–13 is the *propositio*, that Christian faith is incompatible with acts of partiality. James draws on Jewish-Christian traditions when making this point. These are traditions that should be well-known among Christian assemblies consisting of both Jews and Gentiles. However, living as they are in a Roman society, the cultural intertexture is in direct conflict with their Jewish-Christian tradition. In the Roman society partiality is a given. Persons are treated according to rank. I gave an overview of the Roman system of rank and signs of rank in chapter four. In the exegesis of vv. 2–4 I argued that the two persons of the *ratio*, entering the assembly, are an equestrian seeking political office, and a beggar, and that the problem of vv. 2–4 is that the assembly is following Roman cultural etiquette given this situation. They treat them according to the Roman cultural etiquette where the equestrian has the right to an honourable seat in the front, and where the beggar is among the lowest in rank and thus is given a shameful seating arrangement. This is against James' teaching about the group of the absolute poor, the πτωχοί. The πτωχοί are significant in the Epistle of James. They are portrayed as the humble (ταπεινοί) in Jas 1:9f and 4:6.10, as the orphans (ὀρφανοί) and widows (χήραι) in Jas 1:27, as the naked (γυμνοί) and those lacking daily food (λειπόμενοι τῆς ἐφημέρου τροφῆς) in Jas 2:14–17 and as the suffering (κακοπαθέω) in Jas 5:3. To treat the πτωχοί well is for James a sign of faith. Hence, the assembly is acting against the teaching of James and the accusation of vv. 2–4 is harsh. The assembly is following Rome as a centre instead of following their own Christian faith.

The Christian faith is elaborated in the *confirmatio*. The main point is that one cannot show partiality because *God has chosen the absolute poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom that he has promised to those who love him*. In the exegesis of vv. 5–7 I have found that to be elected by God and to be heirs of his Kingdom are the same and that this draws on very strong Jesus traditions, e.g. the parable about the vineyard and the tenants (Matt 21:33–46 with parallels in Mark 12:1–12 and Luke 20:9–19) and the beatitudes in Matt 5:2–12 and Luke 6:20–23. The utter contrast in Jas 2:1–13 is that the teaching about the absolute poor as chosen by God obviously was known to the assembly in James 2, yet they follow Roman cultural etiquette and through this they dishonour the beggar, the very one

that they on the basis of their own Jewish-Christian background should have honoured. I found that the fact that God has chosen the absolute poor serves as a further support for the *propositio* of Jas 2:1–13.

By giving the beggar a dishonourable seat, according to Jewish-Christian tradition, and the equestrian an honourable seat, the assembly is following the Roman system of honour and shame. By doing so they in effect dishonour God himself, because through dishonouring God's elect they dishonour God. One might say that the *πίστις* of the assembly is a contrast to the *πίστις* of the poor. I have argued that *πίστις* should be understood as trust. The beggar trusts God, whereas it seems that the assembly does not. Instead they put their trust in a representative of the Roman Empire. Through doing this, they dishonour God's elect.

The *exornatio*, vv. 8–11, further confirms the argument that the author has already established: The addressees of the Epistle act wrongly according to their Jewish-Christian background when they show partiality in the assembly. They act according to Roman etiquette rather than Christian standards. James argues against their actions from a Jewish-Christian point of view. He refers to Lev 19:15 and tells them that their partiality makes them evil-thinking judges (v. 4). He refers to Jesus' teaching to show them that the very one they are dishonouring is the one they should honour because the beggar is part of a group chosen by God.

In vv. 8–9 James then shows them that by acting within Roman cultural etiquette, they actually become transgressors of the royal Law. They break with Jesus' commands and understanding of the Law. By acting as Romans they do not live according to the love command which is the fulfilment of the Law and the alternative James gives them. This could mean that the addressees have two major entities to relate to: a) the Christian teaching of the royal Law, love your neighbour as yourself, and b) the Roman Empire and Roman etiquette. If they abide by one, they transgress against the other. If they abide by the royal Law, they transgress against the Empire. If they abide by Roman etiquette, they transgress against the love command and through this the whole Law, and can be condemned by the Law.

The *complexio*, vv. 12–13, offers a brief conclusion to the textual unit that is a natural consequence of the previous verses and that points forward to vv. 14–26. The main point is again that the members of the assembly do not live as they teach. By living as Romans they have treated people with partiality which is in direct conflict with the love command. The consequence of partiality is merciless judgement by God.

CHAPTER FIVE

IDEOLOGICAL TEXTURE: TOWARD A POSTCOLONIAL READING ON JAMES 2:1–13

INTRODUCTION

As a child I happily walked to school, but there they told me: 'We speak Norwegian here.' And I felt little and stupid when they said about my mother tongue: 'We keep silent about that.' That is how I learnt that the Sámi person was wretched. That is how I learnt to believe 'You are a Sámi, you are wretched.'¹

Mari Boiné is one of the most significant singer songwriters in Norway at the moment. In the beginning of her career she wrote her lyrics in Norwegian. This was not her mother tongue, as she belongs to the indigenous Sámi people of the North. The above cited lyric is her cultural translation of John Lennon's 'Working class hero'. This very short part of a song lyric shows us some key issues within postcolonialism. Binarism is one of them here represented by the binaries of us—the other, centre—margin, Norwegian—Sámi, valuable—unvaluable. This lyric also illuminates issues of assimilation and consequent hybridity, as well as the concept of 'othering'. Boiné also names the oppressors of her childhood: the schools. She shows very efficiently how minds were colonised. By naming oppressors and oppressiveness she starts a decolonising of the mind. Through this very shallow analysis of a short part of Boiné's lyric we have observed some effects of imperial processes among the Sámi people.

How can we observe the effects of imperial processes in Jas 2:1–13? We can do the same as we did with the Mari Boiné lyric. What we shall look at now, is how diaspora, presence of an imperial official, hybridity, naming of oppressors, binarism and 'othering' are relevant concepts for the interpretation of Jas 2:1–13.

¹ Lyrics by Mari Boiné. This is my translation into English from Boiné's translation from the Sámi language to Norwegian. Mari Boiné's Norwegian translation goes like this: "Som barn gikk jeg lykkelig vegen til skolen, men der sa de det: "Her snakker vi norsk." Og liten og dum synes jeg sjøl at jeg var, da de sa om mitt morsmål: "Vi tier om det." Sånn lærte jeg å tro at det samiske var usselt. Sånn lærte jeg å tro "du er same og usselt."

THE PRECONDITION OF THE EPISTLE OF JAMES—DIASPORA

One of the consequences of colonialism is the phenomenon of diaspora. This phenomenon is a fundamental basis for the Epistle of James as such, as the whole epistle is addressed to the twelve tribes of the diaspora, see Jas 1:1

Ἰάκωβος θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ δούλος ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ χαίρειν.

What does the condition of diaspora mean for individuals? The displacement may on a general level have multiple reasons, such as slavery, indenture, business, settlement, etc.² The Roman world was no different from modern empires when it came to diasporas. Slavery was widely known and slaves were traded from outside the empire and from the new colonies.³ It is hard to give a percentage of how many slaves there were in the Roman Empire at a certain point of time, but there clearly was a rising need for them. Frier argues that around 15% of the population during the high empire might have been slaves. That would constitute up to 7 million slaves.⁴ This gives us an indication of the slave population in the late first century as well. What we can conclude, is that only on the basis of slavery in the Roman Empire, one would have a large minority of people living in diasporas and under diasporic conditions.

A somewhat different reason for diasporic living in the Roman Empire was trade or business. The known world was globalised through the Empire in a parallel way to what we can observe in today's globalised world. The business world of the Empire was also globalised in a similar way that the business world is today. Tradesmen did then, as now, move around in the Empire, and therefore they also were part of diasporas.

A third significant reason for diasporas in the Roman world, were settlements, or the colonies themselves. Roman citizens were moved out of Rome to the colonies. Roman officials served in the colonies. This is a comparable situation to any modern colonial administration.

The diasporas of the Roman Empire had, in a similar way to the diasporas of the modern empires, different faces. The empirical oppression of slavery led to one form of diaspora where the binary power-powerless was significant, and where the diaspora itself was an oppressive tool. Trade

² See Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, 217.

³ Frier, "Demography", 810.

⁴ See *Ibid.*, 812.

and business led then as now, to diasporic communities which were voluntary based, and which traded off of the Empire. The subjects of these diasporas were mainly free men and although diasporic living would have consequences regarding the understanding of place, home and self, the tradesmen were mainly using the positive opportunities the omnipresence of the Empire gave them. The diasporas of the colonies were constituting the colonial administration. Now, these latter diasporas, were diasporas of Roman citizens, and the binary centre—margin is relevant for these communities. They were Romans that lived diasporic lives in other cities than Rome. They were Roman officials sent on a mission from Rome, but by and large unable to participate in Roman life. The diasporas of the tradesmen could be both Roman citizens and non-citizens. The diasporas of the slaves were very clearly oppressive.

The different faces of diaspora show that diaspora can be understood from different perspectives. It can be understood from the perspective of the centre, or from the perspective of the margin. Diasporic living can be a way of trading off of the empire, or a tool for empirical oppression. From either perspective, diasporic living influences identity, memory and home.⁵ What does home mean in the diaspora, and what does uncertainty about what home mean, have to say for the identity of individuals? The phenomenon of diaspora illuminate the binaries of 'us' and 'the other', 'centre' and 'margin', 'power' and 'powerless', 'slaves' and 'free', 'rich' and 'poor' to mention some. The phenomenon also illuminates the postcolonial concept of hybridity. This can be a consequence of diasporic living.

Diaspora is a precondition of the whole epistle of James as it is addressed to the twelve tribes of the diaspora. The diaspora that James addresses his epistle to, can be understood both as a geographical diaspora, and as a religious or ideological diaspora. The admonitions of the epistle addresses challenges of diasporic life that one need to be aware of, such as binarism, hybridity, becoming an oppressor and othering.

We also see a different form of diaspora in James than the one illuminated by the address, namely the diasporic colonial administration. This is what I call 'imperial presence', i.e. the fact that a Roman official is one of the main characters of Jas 2:1–13.

⁵ Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, 218.

IMPERIAL PRESENCE IN JAMES 2:1–13

One of the most striking features of Jas 2:1–13 when read with a postcolonial optic is the presence of a Roman official in the text. I have argued thoroughly both in chapter four and in the exegesis of vv. 2–4 that the man with the gold ring (ἄνθρωπος χρυσοδακτύλιος) wearing a *toga candida* (ἑσθῆς λαμπρός) is an equestrian running for political office.⁶ The main arguments for this view are:

- a. The wearing of the gold ring was limited to the senatorial and equestrian orders during the first century C.E., but normally it was only the equestrians who actually wore the gold ring.⁷ Hence, the ἄνθρωπος χρυσοδακτύλιος in Jas 2:2 is probably an equestrian.
- b. The equestrian visiting the assembly in James 2 is wearing bright clothing. The Greek expression, ἑσθῆς λαμπρός, is the Greek equivalent to the Latin *toga candida*. This was the candidate's toga that only a candidate for political office was allowed to wear. Only senators and equestrians had the right to be candidates for political offices.⁸
- c. The senators and equestrians were given honourable seats in the theatre, the circus, at the public games, etc. For the equestrians these seats were the first fourteen rows in the theatre.⁹ The right to seating privileges most likely extended to private or semi-private occasions as well. Hence, the seat that the ἄνθρωπος χρυσοδακτύλιος is given in Jas 2:3 represents a further argument for him being an equestrian.

These three arguments have made it clear that the most probable reading of the text in its political and cultural context is that the man with the

⁶ Although Sharon H. Ringe does not argue that the ἄνθρωπος χρυσοδακτύλιος is an equestrian, she draws the attention towards the imperial context of Jas 2:1–13 and argues that James 2 “confronts fundamental dimensions of the ideology undergirding the imperial context to which it was addressed”. These fundamental dimensions are according to Ringe, first that the colonies were to provide wealth to Rome and the rich person in James 2 was a person that would contribute to that. Second, to value the rich over the poor was “a dimension of the honour-shame system that regulated imperial society and determined the relative worth of persons”, see Ringe, “The Letter of James” 373.

⁷ Main classical sources for this are Plinius, Cassius Dio and Suetonius. The specific references can be found in the section ‘Gold rings’ in chapter four.

⁸ See Cassius Dio, 52.20.1–5 and the section ‘Clothing’ in chapter four.

⁹ Main sources are Suetonius, Livius, Cicero, Tacitus and Plinius. For specific references, see the section ‘Seating privileges’ in chapter four.

gold ring visiting the assembly is an equestrian running for political office, hence there is a direct imperial presence in the text.

One may ask which offices an equestrian could hold. The order had been reorganised by the emperor Augustus. According to Fergus Millar, the role of the equestrian order in the imperial administration developed during the first century C.E., and it is fair to say that an equestrian civil service emerged.¹⁰ By the end of the century the equestrian order was part of the imperial administration all over the Empire. Members of the equestrian order were given responsibility for crucial matters such as finances, tax collection, corn supply (*praefectus annonae*), administration of the emperor's private property, etc. Although rare, there are examples of equestrians becoming governors of provinces.¹¹ Jas 2:1–13 does not name which office the equestrian was running for, but we may deduce from the context that he must necessarily have been rich and of considerable status.

This direct imperial presence in Jas 2 affects the whole argument of James. From a postcolonial perspective this is significant. The imperial presence in the text, and the importance of this for the argument of the textual unit shows a literary consequence of the colonial processes in first century Christianity. The colonial processes affected the Christians in a way that needed to be addressed.

Why would an equestrian running for political office visit a Christian assembly? The answer is found in the hybridity of the assembly. The assembly is situated in a Roman city somewhere in the Empire. They have adapted to the Roman ways of life to such an extent that they are seen as a voluntary association, which makes them attractive as clients and political supporters.¹² This means that the assembly through assimilation (mimicry) has, partly or fully, distanced themselves from the Jewish-Christian position as marginalised in the wider context of the Roman Empire. They have become as attractive as any other voluntary association in the midst of the Empire, and the most probable interpretation seems to be that the equestrian is simply there to gather support for his candidacy.

The diasporic precondition and the imperial presence are foundational for the plot of Jas 2:1–13. The members of the assembly are both

¹⁰ Millar, *The Roman Republic and the Augustan Revolution*, 75.

¹¹ For further references, see chapter four.

¹² Several scholars have argued that the Christian assemblies could be understood to be voluntary associations in the context of a Roman city, see e.g. McCready, "Ekklesia and Voluntary Associations," 61–63, and Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 77–80.

geographically and ideologically living in the diaspora to such an extent that their identities have become hybrid. The equestrian is living in the diaspora of the colonial administration. The plot of Jas 2:1–13 and the main problem in the textual unit, is somewhere in the juxtaposition of imperial presence, diaspora and hybridity.

HYBRID IDENTITIES IN JAMES 2:1–13

Hybrid identities and the concept of 'hybridity' is the cultural in-between space that will be found in the contact zone produced by colonialism and imperialism.¹³ It is the cultural intersection between coloniser and colonised, centre and margin. Hybridity shows cultural change and therefore identity change both among coloniser and colonised. It has been observed that the cultural effect of colonisation often is that the culture of the colonised becomes more like the culture of the coloniser. This may be a strategy of survival.

In James 2 we meet the hybrid identities of the Christian assembly. When they in the situation portrayed automatically act according to the proper Roman etiquette, and apparently without questioning it, it shows a Christian community that has shifted their identity from a Christian based cultural identity to a Roman based identity. This is the main problem for the author of the Epistle. He is accusing the community for being too Roman. He is accusing the consequences of their hybridity.

Hybridity is found in the *ratio*. In Jas 2:1–13 hybrid identities is the main reason for the favouritism that the author of the Epistle opposes. The assembly automatically acts as Romans when presented with a Roman official. This is due to their hybrid identities. They are so strongly integrated in Roman society, i.e. hybrid, that they do not even see their actions as problematic. It seems that their hybridity is a sign for James that they have put aside the teaching from their Jewish-Christian background when confronted with an equestrian. The consequence of the hybridity is that the members of the assembly have become evil-thinking judges.

Because the assembly is so assimilated into Roman society, they are seen as significant players in this society. They have been able to attract a very influential patron to their assembly. He obviously sees them as potential political supporters. For him it is important to keep a good relationship

¹³ See e.g. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 118–121.

with them, because that will lead them to support him at the elections. They on the other hand have an interest in keeping a good relationship with him. As a patron, he may support them financially. But even more important is his possible official position within the administration. To be on good terms with a Roman official would have the great benefit that one was protected in several ways. Come hunger, one would have more easy access to the corn supply. Come trials, one could possibly have a better chance with influential and powerful friends. Come persecutions, one would—by having an official as a patron—already be on good terms with a representative of the Empire and thus be protected. We know that persecutions under the emperor Domitian were widespread, and therefore particularly under his reign it could be a matter of life or death whether you were on good terms with his officials or not.

The author of the Epistle of James, who takes on the authority of James the brother of the Lord, has a strong call for the assembly: he calls them back to their original faith. In extension this is a call away from their hybridity, away from Roman cultural etiquette and back to their Jewish-Christian religious heritage. This call has as a consequence that they have to put themselves back into the margins of Roman society. They have to live out their faith in God and act counter-culturally with regard to Roman cultural etiquette. Such a counter-cultural pattern means to live according to the love command, and it has as a consequence that the assembly cannot show partiality according to rank. They have to treat everybody as equal.

OPPRESSION IN JAMES 2:1–13

When reading with a postcolonial optic, naming of oppressors is central. It is important from a postcolonial perspective, because colonisation of the minds is central to colonialism. A decolonisation of the minds is therefore equally significant to postcolonialism. A starting point for decolonisation of the minds, is to name the ones who colonised the minds in the first place, i.e. name the oppressors or the oppressive regimes.

The oppressors of the assembly are named directly in the *confirmatio* of the textual unit. The rich are the ones who oppress the Christians.¹⁴ What exactly the oppression consists of is not quite clear, but it seems that part

¹⁴ In agreement with Ringe, "The Letter of James" 373.

of it is linked to the courts of justice, and part of it is linked to blasphemy against Christ. The Christian assemblies are the ones who are oppressed.

A different perspective concerning oppression within postcolonialism is that the effect of colonial oppression often is that some of the oppressed themselves become oppressors. It is the postcolonial ‘if you can’t beat them, join them’-effect. It is also the worst consequence of hybridity.

There are two textual indications of the oppressed becoming oppressors in Jas 2:1–13. The first one is from the *ratio* of the textual unit. The evil-thinking judges of v. 4 carry some of the role of oppressors. This is evident from the fact that the oppression named in v. 6b is linked to the courts of justice. Hence, when the assembly acts according to Roman etiquette and treats the equestrian with honour and the beggar with dishonour, these actions are signs that members of the assembly have become oppressors. The second textual indication of oppressed becoming oppressors is from the *confirmatio*. In v. 6 the author of James says straight out that the assembly is dishonouring the beggar. This is an action of oppression, hence the oppressed have become the oppressors.

That the oppressed have become the oppressors is a strong indication of hybrid identities in Jas 2.

BINARISM IN JAMES 2:1–13

The concept of binarism within postcolonial studies has to do with “the binary logic of imperialism”, where “binary oppositions have established a relation of dominance”.¹⁵ Binarism can be observed in every section of Jas 2:1–13. In the *propositio* (v. 1) the issue of προσωποληψία illuminates the binaries of coloniser—colonised, power—powerless and centre—margin. The binary coloniser—colonised is fundamental to the interpretation of προσωποληψία. Was differential treatment a problem at all? From the perspective of the coloniser the προσωποληψία was not a problem but the standard cultural etiquette. It was simply a way of showing honour. However, the perspective of the colonised may have been somewhat different. The προσωποληψία was the everyday expression of imperial oppression.

The binary coloniser—colonised lead us over to the binary power—powerless. It is obvious that the power lay with the coloniser, i.e. the Romans. If we put Roman cultural etiquette up against Jewish-Christian faith on the issue of differential treatment, it is clear that the power to

¹⁵ Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 24.

define etiquette in the Roman Empire also concerning *προσωποληψία* lay with the coloniser. Up against this, the believers in the Jewish-Christian faith were powerless. Now, what does the author of the Epistle of James do? He actually tries to shift the power when it comes to this issue. He draws the attention towards the Christian faith and consequently towards Jesus' teaching about equality. From a postcolonial perspective, we can conclude that he tries to change the binary power—powerless by drawing the attention of the believers towards the centre of their faith, Jesus Christ. Their faith should have defining power over their actions, not the Romans.

The centre of the Empire was the city of Rome with the emperor, the senate and the people. This was both a geographical and an ideological centre. The margin was everything else; geographically, ideologically, culturally and religiously. When the author of the Epistle of James tries to change the binary power—powerless, he also tries to change the binary centre—margin. In the *ratio* (vv. 2–4) he argues openly that for the Christians the centre cannot be Rome, but should be their own faith. This faith has consequences for how they live their lives in the Roman Empire. Their faith must have consequences when it comes to how they treat the other. Rome was the specific geographical location that symbolised the imperial values that James argues against. Representatives of Rome were everywhere, and Rome influenced everything. Compared to Rome everything else is on the margins. However, the author of James presents an alternative centre. This is the centre of the Jewish-Christian heritage. In a direct geographical sense Jerusalem is the city from which Christianity spread. It is the religious centre of the assemblies to whom James is writing. The Jerusalem assembly was also the assembly that was contacted if there was conflict in another assembly, cf. Acts 15. Jerusalem is a centre whose etiquette is in opposition to the Roman etiquette. It is the religious centre of the assemblies. Compared to Jerusalem everything else is, religiously speaking, on the margins. Both of these two centres can be understood either geographically as the cities, Rome and Jerusalem, or they can be understood figuratively as the cultural centre vs. the centre of the religious tradition. As a cultural centre, Rome is often understood symbolically as the oppressor in the New Testament, see e.g. 1 Peter and Revelation,¹⁶

¹⁶ 1 Pet 5:13; Rev 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21. In 1 Peter the term 'Babylon' may be a parallel term to dispersion (*διασπορά*) in 1:1. As such it does not necessarily mean Rome as oppressor, see David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, WBC, vol. 52B (Nashville: Nelson, 1998), 829, who also comments on the use of the term in 1 Pet 5:13. However, according to Aune p. 829, the term 'Babylon' as a cipher for Rome "occurs occasionally in Jewish apocalyptic

whereas Jerusalem is a symbol of redemption. It is the city to which Jewish and Jewish-Christian eschatological expectations are connected. From Jerusalem (or Zion) salvation and redemption shall come to earth. My understanding of Rome and Jerusalem as contradicting centres combines the concrete and figurative aspects. Rome should be understood both as the capital of the Empire and as an oppressor. Jerusalem should likewise be understood both as the founding city of the Christian church as well as the city of redemption.

If Rome is the centre, its contradicting margin is Jerusalem. However, if Jerusalem is the centre, its contradicting margin is Rome. In James 2 these two centres are in obvious conflict. If the assembly acts according to Roman etiquette, they inevitably dishonour God's elect, they act against the love command and they become evil-thinking judges. This is all against their own religious heritage from Jerusalem. However, if the assembly follows the other centre, Jerusalem, by being true to their Jewish-Christian background, this will have as a consequence that they show mercy, that they live according to the love command, that they thus do not show partiality according to rank and that they therefore will treat the beggar and the equestrian equally. Through this they themselves will be shown mercy. If they do all this, the consequence will also be that they act against Rome as a centre because they are acting against the Roman etiquette by dishonouring the equestrian. The consequence of this may be persecution and oppression.

The binaries of coloniser—colonised, power—powerless and centre—margin are all continued in the *confirmatio* (vv. 5–7). The *confirmatio* confirms that the assembly is both valuing Rome as their centre and acting against Jerusalem as their centre through their dishonouring of the poor, the very people that God has chosen. As in the *propositio* and *ratio*, the author of the Epistle tries to shift the understanding of what is centre, margin, power and powerless. When he asks the rhetorical question “Has not God chosen the absolute poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom that he has promised to those who love him?”, he shows the members of the assembly yet again, that the power they should follow is not the power of the centre; the coloniser, but the power of the margin; God.

literature”. The apocalyptic tradition of the cipher is that Rome is comparable to Babylon because they were both centres of world empires that captured Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple, hence they are oppressors. The references to Jewish apocalyptic literature are Dan 4:30; 4 *Ezra* 3:1–2, 28–31; 16:44, 46; 2 *Bar.* 10:2; 11:1 and 67:7.

The binaries rich—poor and honour—shame are also significant in the *confirmatio*. It is rather obvious for any reader that an equestrian running for political office, and a beggar, fit into the rich—poor binary. However, the author of the Epistle questions this. He asks who are really the rich and the poor? Through a rhetorical question he draws the attention of the addressees towards their wrongdoing. They have treated the equestrian as if he was the rich one, but it is the beggar who really is rich in the eyes of God. This leads us over to the honour—shame binary. The author is accusing the assembly of shaming the beggar because they are honouring the equestrian. They were devaluating the group of people that they should honour, given that the absolute poor were chosen by God. Now, by shaming them, they also are dishonouring God. In a Roman context however, honouring the poor would consequently mean a dishonouring of the rich, in this case an equestrian running for office. One of the foundations of Graeco-Roman society lay at the juxtaposition of honour, shame, patronage and grace. Again, what the author is asking the Christians to do, is to go against the cultural etiquette of the society they live in, consequently dishonouring the coloniser. If they were actually to do that, it must have been received by the colonisers as resistance against the Empire. The very strong cultural critique implicit in James' teaching in effect would also be a resistance against the Empire and the Emperor.

The *exornatio* (vv. 8–11) represents the postcolonial alternative for James. The alternative is to fulfil the royal law. "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" is his final statement of what is the real centre and what is the real power. For his addressees Rome is the centre to which they turn, whereas everything else, including their own Christian heritage, is on the margin. James tries to change this by putting their Christian faith in the centre and thus defining Rome, the political power, as the margin. Figuratively speaking, Jerusalem represents the alternative centre for the author of the Epistle of James. Thus, a postcolonial perspective on Jas 2 shows us centres in conflict, Rome as the political centre versus Jerusalem as the religious centre.

In the *complexio* (vv. 12–13) the binary ἔλεος—ἀνέλεος works as a continuation and conclusion of the former binaries of coloniser—colonised, power—powerless, centre—margin, honour—shame and rich—poor. Through the binary ἔλεος—ἀνέλεος James concludes his argument. Mercy is what comes out of the Christian faith. Mercy is the practical consequence of neighbour love. Mercyless acts are what the coloniser would do. Mercyless acts are what comes out of putting Rome at the centre. The *complexio* shows one last time two centres in conflict.

PORTRAYAL OF 'THE OTHER' IN JAMES 2:1–13

One of Said's main points in *Orientalism* was that the occident created the oriental as its negative 'other'. This was done mainly for the occident to be able to define themselves as the positive 'self'. This 'othering' is fundamental to colonialism as it gives the coloniser more value than the colonised. "The existence of others is crucial in defining what is 'normal' and in locating one's own place in the world".¹⁷ For the coloniser one's own place in the world is on the top of the pyramide, or in the centre of the world. The concept of 'the other' is used somewhat oppressively to create a negative contrasting image to the colonial power. 'The other' is 'the negative other'. The postcolonial theory around 'otherness' suggests that for an imperial power 'the other' is necessary both as someone to subjugate and as the negative contrast to oneself that is needed for construction of the imperial identity. Definition of 'the other' is always done from the centre. To talk about 'the other' is hence a power game.

In Jas 2:1–13 there is a slightly different picture of 'the other'. This picture is not painted from the perspective of the political centre, Rome. Instead, 'the other' is used by the author of James as a power tool against Rome as a centre. He presents himself as a representative of the religious centre, namely Jerusalem, and he portrays the political centre, Rome, as 'the negative other'. The portrayal is quite simple: 'the other' is evil. 'The other' represents the evil contrast to the Jewish-Christian faith. If the assembly follows the cultural etiquette of 'the other', the consequence is that they reject and deny the most central aspect of their own faith, namely the love command. Hence the political and geographical centre, Rome, is portrayed as 'the negative other' of the Christian assembly. What the author of the Epistle of James does here, is to use the colonial strategy of 'othering' against the colonisers. He turns the binary us—the other around so that 'us' are the colonised, not the colonisers. James uses colonial instruments to oppose colonialism.

THE CONSEQUENCE OF JAMES' STRATEGY IN JAMES 2:1–13

It is apparent that the author of James has one clear strategy, namely to convince the assembly that their hybrid identities leads to their condem-

¹⁷ Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 169.

nation by the Law of God as transgressors, and that they need to turn back to the centre of their faith, namely Jerusalem.

What consequences would this have for the assembly? If they were to live according to their Jewish-Christian heritage, they would live according to the love command. On the basis of their own religious background, particularly the Jesus tradition (rather than some of the inherited Jewish traditions), they could not show partiality according to rank. This means that given the situation described in Jas 2:2–4, they could not have treated the beggar any different than the equestrian. According to Roman cultural etiquette, their differential treatment of the equestrian and the beggar did not dishonour the beggar. He was treated according to rank, as was the equestrian, hence they were both treated with honour. However, according to the Jewish-Christian heritage of the assembly, the differential treatment of the beggar and the equestrian did in effect dishonour the beggar. Hence, James' call to the assembly to act according to their religious background would have as a consequence that the beggar should be treated equally to the equestrian. To treat the beggar and the equestrian equally would, however, on the basis of Roman cultural background, dishonour the equestrian. In this particular case we have to assume that the equestrian was more than normally influential, since he was running for political office. He was a representative of the Empire. Hence, to dishonour him would be equal to dishonouring the emperor himself. This of course would have dramatic consequences for the assembly. They already knew of oppression (v. 6). It would be highly probable that dishonouring the equestrian would lead to persecutions and oppression.¹⁸ Hence, what James is asking of the assemblies 'in the diaspora' is that they should put themselves in a position that had persecution, oppression and martyrdom as the likely consequence.

¹⁸ It is well known that the Emperor Domitian, who was the emperor during the time I have dated the Epistle of James to, was rather paranoid and persecuted whoever he thought would undermine his authority as an emperor. This included political opponents as well as ideological opponents e.g. among the philosophers.

PART THREE

CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS

INTRODUCTION

In part I of this book, “Introduction and background”, I argued that there are some interpretative needs concerning Jas 2:1–13: first, to the best of my knowledge the only postcolonial interpretation of the Epistle of James as a whole that I am aware of, is by Sharon H. Ringe.¹ I do not know of any postcolonial studies of Jas 2:1–13 more specifically.² Hence, there is a need for a postcolonial perspective on the interpretation of James. In addition I have argued that the material at hand is suitable for a postcolonial interpretation. Second, I have shown that there is an interpretative need concerning a focus on the relation between the Epistle of James and Graeco-Roman culture. I have focused this specifically around the issue of rank and differences in rank. Contrary to the prevailing opinion among Jamesian scholars I have argued that the *ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος* of Jas 2:2 is not only a very rich man, he is also a Roman equestrian seeking political office. Hence, a focus on rank and differences of rank in the first-century Roman Empire has been significant for this study. Compared to the monographs presented in chapter three therefore, I have put forward a new understanding of Jas 2:1–13. This new understanding has put the text in the midst of the Roman imperial system of rank and has shown that the conflict of the text has more to do with how one as Christians should relate to representatives of the imperial administration than how one as Christians should treat rich and poor.

I shall focus the conclusion of this book around four pillars. First, I shall reflect on the structure and genre of the Epistle of James in relation to Jas 2:1–13. Second, I shall reflect upon the complex issue of rich and poor in relation to issues of rank and power. Third, I shall reflect upon colonial subjects, processes of colonialism and texts. Fourth, I shall focus upon

¹ Ringe, “The Letter of James” 369–379.

² The only postcolonial interpretation I am aware of concerning James 2 is a postcolonial interpretation of Jas 2:14–26, see Coker, “Nativism in James 2.14–26: A Post-Colonial Reading”.

further research needs concerning the Epistle of James and specifically Jas 2:1–13.

THE STRUCTURE AND GENRE OF THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

In the section 'Inner texture' in chapter two I argued that there is a strong link between James 1 and the rest of the Epistle. The issues of trials, testing, temptation and endurance are mentioned already in James 1 and are linked to the issue of oppression in Jas 2:6b–7. From my exegesis of these verses I can conclude that the oppression may have been imperial oppression, but not necessarily. It was most likely public in its form. Therefore one may also conclude that when James talks about trials, testing, temptation and endurance, it may very well be linked to imperial oppression. One should also suppose that it is not talk about some form of 'inner religious temptation' but a real public outer threat that the Christians had to endure.

The issue of wisdom is significant in the whole Epistle. It may even be the most prominent issue of the Epistle. However, it is not directly mentioned in Jas 2:1–13. After having interpreted the text though, I would conclude that the assembly through their actions have shown that they have abandoned the wisdom from above.

Similarly, they have shown through their actions that they are double-minded. They have doubted the wisdom from above and instead they have put their trust in a representative of the Roman Empire. After my interpretation with a postcolonial optic, it seems apt to say that what postcolonialism calls hybrid identities, the author of the Epistle of James calls double-mindedness. The hybridity of the Christian assemblies has as an effect that they trust a representative of the Roman Empire more than they trust God. Through doing this, they are showing doubt towards God. They are double-minded, see Jas 1:6–8 and the section on the double-minded person in chapter two.

As I pointed out in the section 'The relation between James 1, Jas 2:1–13 and the rest of the Epistle' in chapter two, the key verses of the Epistle of James are 3:17–18. Although the wisdom from above is not mentioned in Jas 2:1–13, my interpretation of the text has shown that the recipients of the Epistle in all ways are acting against the values of Jas 3:17–18. They are not pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy, impartial and sincere. On the contrary, they act as double-minded people, they put their trust in a representative of the Empire instead of in God. They do

not show mercy towards the beggar. And worst of all, they are acting with partiality. Thus, in the context of the entire Epistle of James, Jas 2:1–13 represents an example of how one should not live as Christians. Instead of adapting to the cultural etiquette of the colonisers one should stick to one's own cultural and religious heritage and treat everybody as equals.

THE COMPLEX ISSUE OF RICH AND POOR—IN RELATION TO RANK AND POWER

In chapter three I situated my study within recent Jamesian research. My focus there was on monographs on poverty and wealth in James. However, as already indicated in chapter three, my conclusion—after having done a historical interpretation on Jas 2:1–13 with a postcolonial optic—is that a probable understanding of the text is that the prime focus is not on poverty and wealth but on differences in rank according to the Roman system of rank. Poverty and wealth were of course factors within the rank system, but the issue of rich and poor in Jas 2:1–13 is rather a complex issue of differences in rank. Thus I have put forward a new understanding of Jas 2:1–13. I have put the text in the midst of the Roman imperial system of rank and have shown that the conflict of the text has more to do with how one as Christians should relate to representatives of the imperial administration than how one as Christians should treat rich and poor.

This has led my understanding of the text quite far away from Martin Dibelius' understanding. First, I consider Jas 2:1–13 to represent a realistic scenario for a Christian assembly in a Roman city. Dibelius on the other hand, holds:

Dass aber ein so unsoziales Verhalten, wie das 2,2ff. geschilderte, in diesen Versammlungen an der Tagesordnung gewesen wäre, darf nach Jak 2,2ff. nicht behauptet werden.

Second, I, unlike Dibelius, hold that the issue at hand is that of difference in rank, not a conflict between rich and pious poor. However, although it is primarily a conflict of rank, the beggars of Jas 2:1–13 may very well be understood in the Jewish tradition of pious poor. From my point of view this only sharpens the conflict. If the beggars are pious poor, how then is it possible for the assembly to dishonour them and instead honour a representative of the Empire?

With the exception of Elsa Tamez none of the researchers presented in chapter three has focused on differences in rank. Tamez, however, does

not make an interpretative point out of the difference in rank. On the other hand I have found this focus in some of the commentaries I used in the exegesis of Jas 2:1–13. The most explicit is Bo Reicke who clearly interprets Jas 2:1–13 as a scenario where a Roman of high rank visits the Christian assembly. Sophie Laws, Douglas J. Moo and Patrick J. Hartin all mention differences in rank as a possible interpretation of the scenario; however they do not make an interpretative point out of it. Therefore I hold that one of the contributions of this study to Jamesian research is that it has put forward the impact the Roman imperial system of rank had on Christian assemblies and the conflicts this caused as a probable understanding of the text.

Concerning the relation between James and Paul, which is a prominent issue of debate within Jamesian research, my interpretation points towards an implication similar to the one expressed by Martin Hengel: one of the problems with Paul is that he made himself dependent on people of high rank as patrons and James criticises this.³

COLONIAL SUBJECTS, PROCESSES OF COLONIALISM AND TEXTS

In the section ‘Methodology’ in chapter one I underlined that any historical interpretation of a text only can establish probability given certain factors. Neither the text, nor my interpretation of it can be ‘objective’ in the sense of establishing a series of unquestionable ‘facts’. In agreement with Vernon K. Robbins, I hold that a text should be understood in several ways, as a witness to history, as communication of history and of ideas and as a witness to culture and cultural contexts. In the process of establishing a probable understanding of Jas 2:1–13 I have therefore found Robbins’ multi-layered approach relevant. Through this approach it has been possible to complement a traditional historical critical interpretation with other perspectives, the most important being the postcolonial optic. What I have specifically contributed to Jamesian research is the unique combination of a historical interpretation with a postcolonial optic. This combination has put forward a probable understanding of the text that is rather different from many other interpretations of Jas 2:1–13.

One obstacle to a postcolonial optic on biblical studies that I highlighted in chapter one was that of the reader. Do I, a privileged Western researcher,

³ For an elaboration on this point, see the section ‘Martin Hengel’ in chapter three.

have any right to participate in a postcolonial discourse? Can I carry out a postcolonial investigation at all? Do I, by adapting postcolonialism, become part of a colonisation of postcolonialism? Having interpreted Jas 2:1–13 with a postcolonial optic, I am still convinced that Western scholars should engage in postcolonial studies. Our calling as researchers should always be to unveil more knowledge and new knowledge. Concerning the study at hand, I am convinced that the postcolonial optic has forced me, despite being a privileged Western researcher, to focus my interpretation on the consequences of the processes of colonialism. However, my role as a researcher can never be anything more than that. To fully understand what it meant to receive a letter that called its recipients to act in a way that could lead to martyrdom is impossible for me. One might need to have had experiences of persecution and oppression to be able to grasp this. As a researcher I can but point to the consequences of colonialism and the consequences for the Christian assemblies of living according to the teaching that James promotes.

I started this book with a quotation from a cultural translation of John Lennon's "Working Class Hero" by the Sámi singer and song-writer Mari Boine:

As a child I happily walked to school, but there they told me: "We speak Norwegian here." And I felt little and stupid when they said about my mother tongue: "We keep silent about that." That is how I learnt that the Sámi person was wretched. That is how I learnt to believe "You are a Sámi, you are wretched."

This was Boine's first lyric in her mother tongue. Before this cultural translation of "Working Class Hero" she had only written in Norwegian, the language of the colonisers and oppressors of the Sámi people.

In an intriguing way this quotation intermingles colonial subjects, processes of colonisation and texts. As a colonial subject Boine was taught that she was wretched. The process of colonisation was to suppress a child's identity and teach her that she was wretched. As a text, her lyric is to be understood as opposition against this process of colonisation. On the other hand, a text can also be used in the process of colonisation as a tool for the coloniser. Understood in a broad sense, language can be such a colonising 'text'. In this particular case, Norwegian was that language.

What Boine expresses in this lyric is sadly not a unique experience for her. During the process of making the Sámis Norwegian, language was a significant tool. The children were not allowed to speak their mother tongue either in class or during play time. As a consequence many of

them never learnt how to read or write their own language. As a further consequence of making a whole people believe that they were wretched, many Sámis denied their culture and their people. Many of them changed their names into typical Norwegian names, and have lived for generations as cultural and ethnic Norwegians. This is an experience and a strategy of survival not unique to the Sámi people. Similar stories can be told about most indigenous peoples that have experienced colonialism or imperialism. Similar stories can also be told about nations that have been colonised by the Western empires. Against this background postcolonialism was developed.

The question now is: Is the experience of becoming wretched found in a lyric from the second half of the twentieth century, and the reality of assimilation found in a whole people of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Sámi in Norway, at all relevant and comparable to the experience found in a 2000 year old text of the New Testament? May our understanding of colonial subjects, the processes of colonisation and texts be similar in the context of the first-century Roman Empire and in the context of modern Western empires? I reflected upon a variation of this question in the section 'Main obstacles to applying a postcolonial optic to biblical research' in chapter one, where I put historical distance forward as a main obstacle to the use of postcolonialism in biblical studies. The question was whether the historical distance between postcolonialism, as practised in the academy today, and the first-century Roman Empire, simply is too big and thus makes postcolonialism irrelevant to biblical studies.

As I am now in a situation where I have actually interpreted Jas 2:1–13 with a postcolonial optic, I am able to conclude that imperialism and colonialism seem to have surprisingly similar consequences for those imperialised, independent of their time in history. For colonial subjects of the modern West, imperialism to a large extent had as a consequence that cultural identities were suppressed and destroyed. Hybrid identities became a survival strategy. My exegesis of Jas 2:1–13 has shown that this was the situation for the colonial subjects of the Christian assemblies that James addresses as well. They were living their lives of hybrid identities and mimicry in the first-century Roman Empire to such an extent that they had totally accepted the Roman system of rank and applied it to their Christian assemblies. James' critique against them is that by doing this, they had left the teaching of their own faith about non-partiality and God's love for the poor and election of the poor. The Christian assemblies addressed in the Epistle of James had responded to imperialism in a way

that is very common for imperialised peoples. Through this they had left their own identities and faith behind. This is a comparable situation to e.g. that of the Sámi people of Norway. The processes of colonialism are surprisingly similar despite the historical distance.

One may also conclude that the author of the Epistle of James took on a similar role as postcolonial authors of the twenty-first century. He was the one calling the Christian assemblies back to their religious heritage. He was the one telling them that their hybridity was a wrong strategy because God does not care about rank. Similarly postcolonial writers, such as Mari Boine, focus on the sources of their culture. They try to recant colonial forms of mimicry and hybridity. As a text, therefore, Jas 2:1–13 may be understood as a postcolonial text opposing the consequences of colonialism.

FURTHER RESEARCH NEEDS

Due to the lack of postcolonial research on the Epistle of James there is a general need for more research on the Epistle with a postcolonial optic. I have contributed to the postcolonial research on the Epistle of James with a historical interpretation of Jas 2:1–13 with a postcolonial optic. Concerning this specific textual unit of the Epistle I hold that there is still a need for a postcolonial analysis of the history of Western interpretations of the Epistle. The main question for such an analysis should be: “How have the Western empires had an impact on and influenced interpretations of the Epistle of James?”

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